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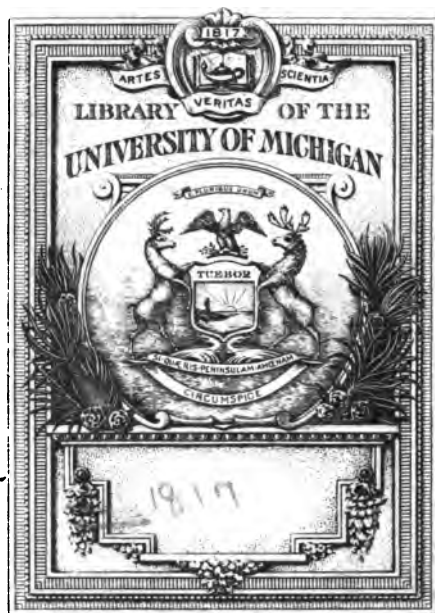
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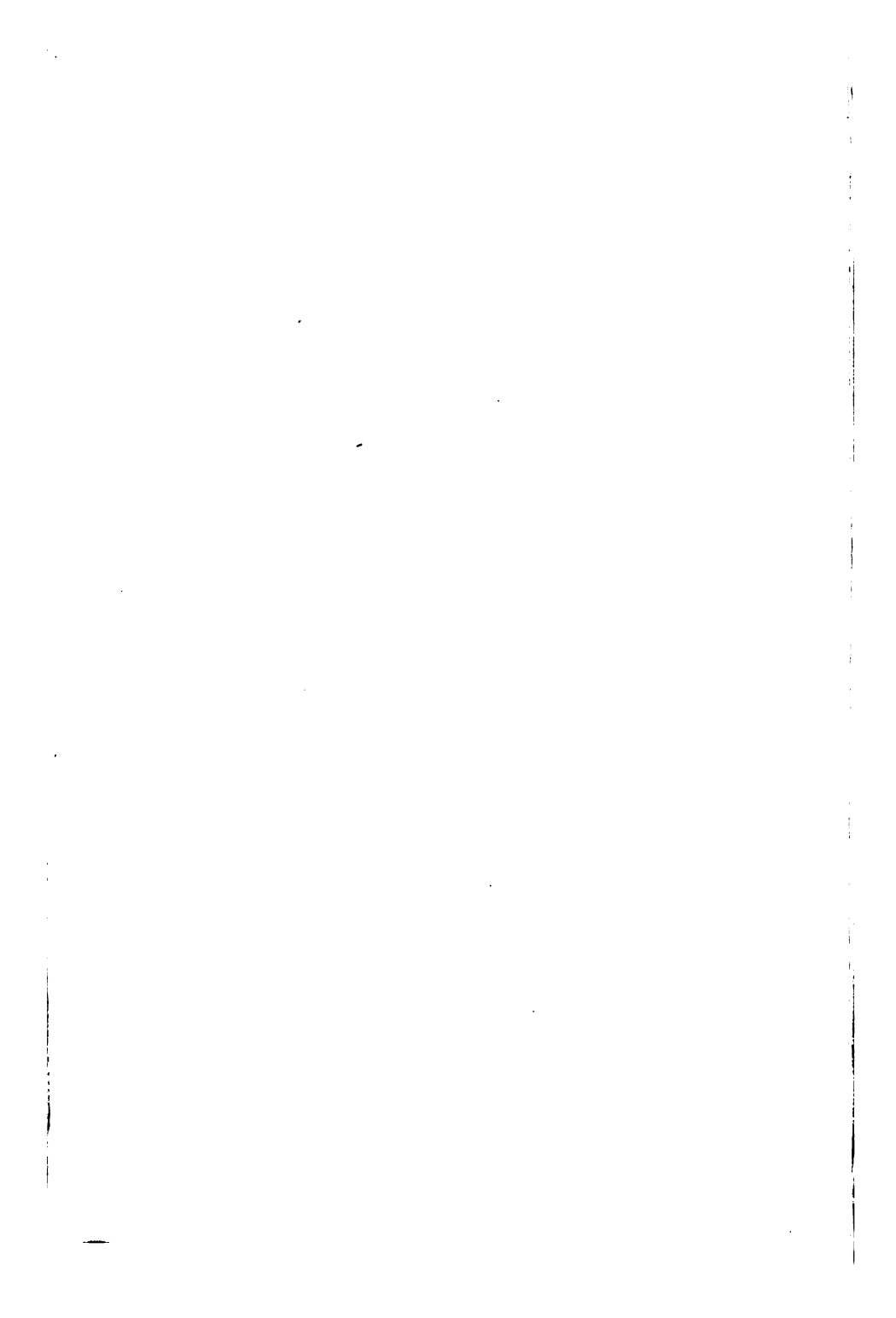
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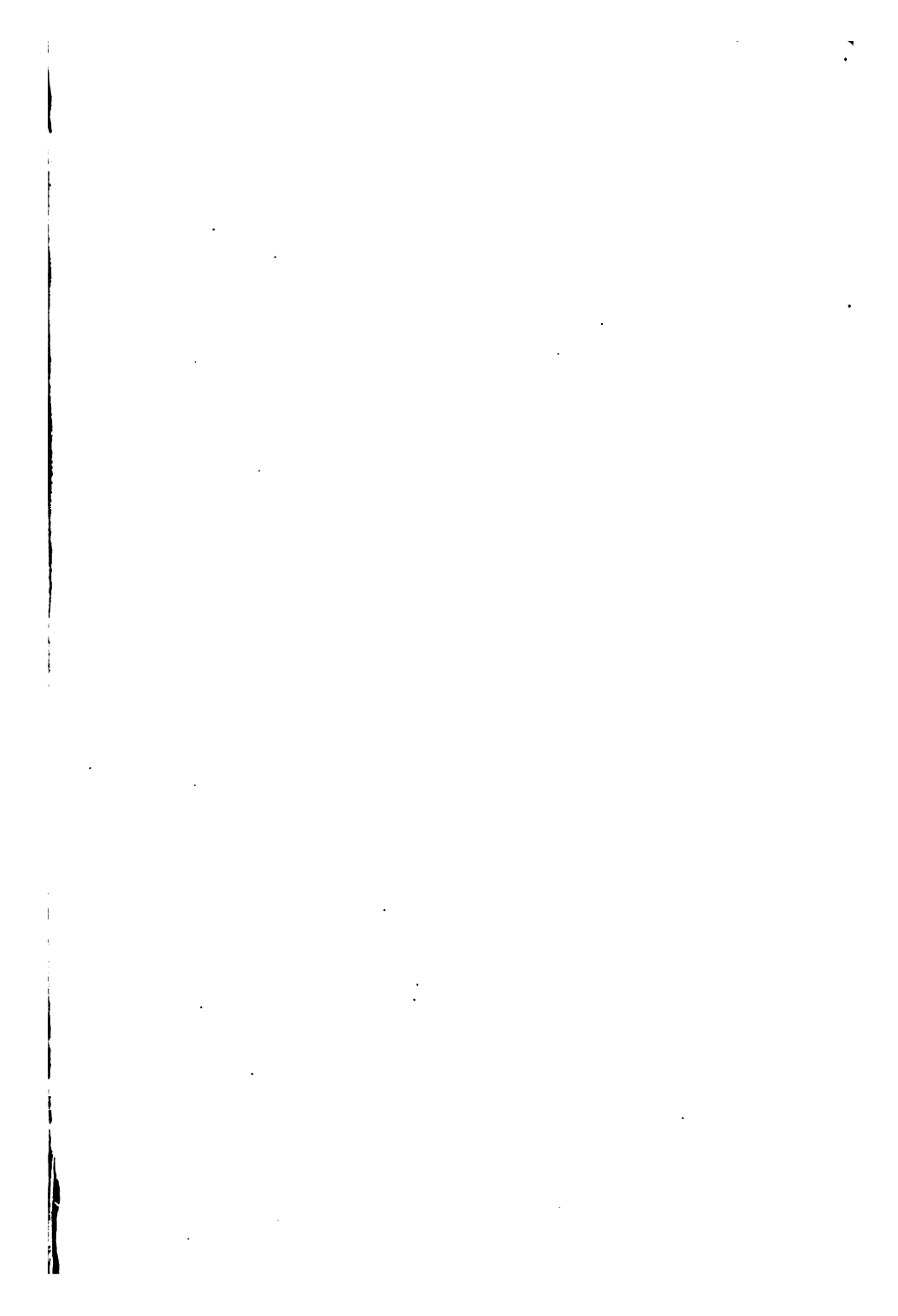
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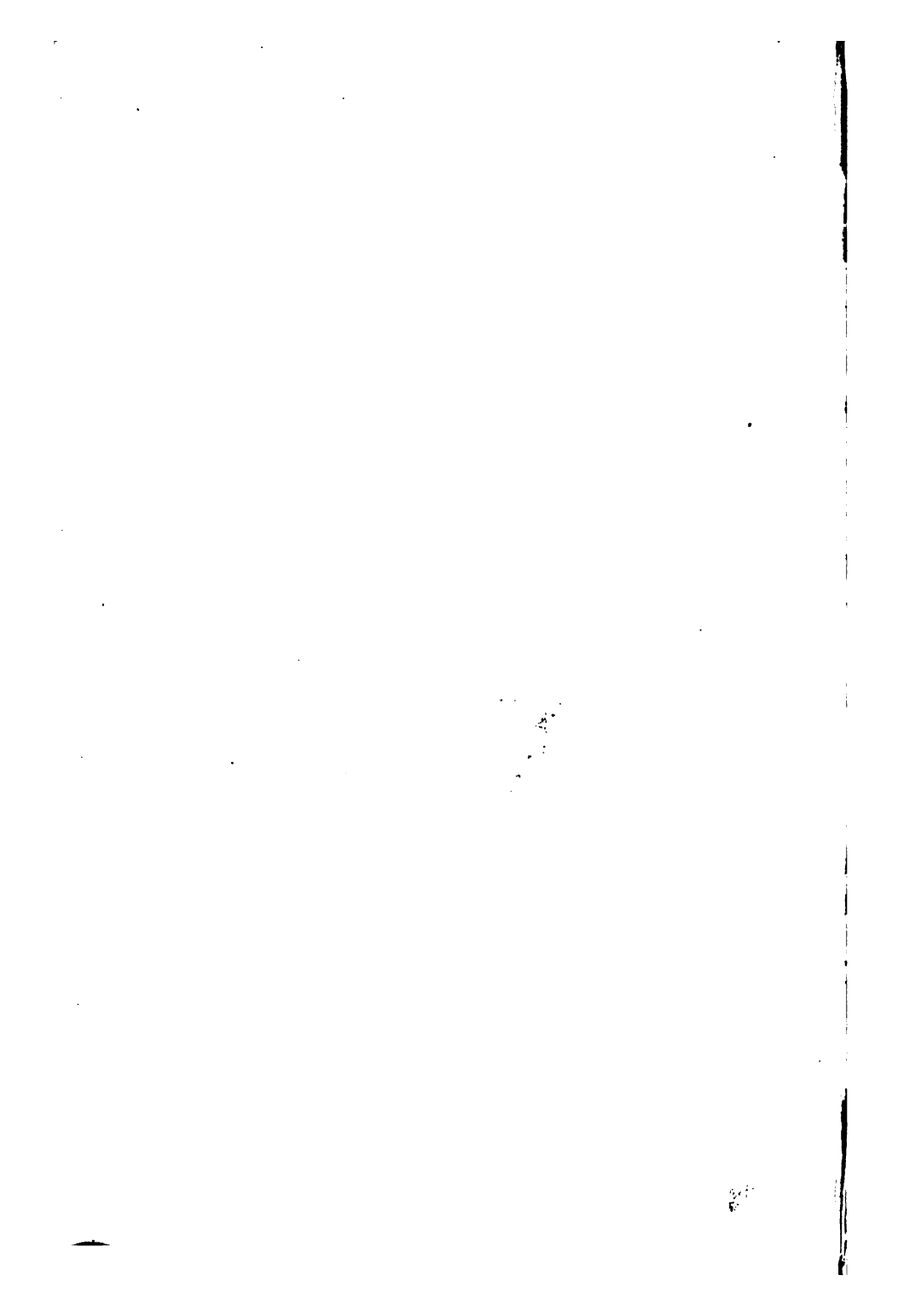


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# THE MODERN READER'S *HAMLET*

BY

HAVEN McCLURE

*B.A., Harvard; the University of Chicago; Secretary  
of the English Council, Indiana State Teachers'  
Association; author of "The Contents of  
the New Testament: An Intro-  
ductory Course."*



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## PREFACE

Any tampering with the text of Shakespeare with an intent to "improve" it would meet and deserve among thinking people just censure. Such effort would be comparable to that of painting the lily. The contents of the present volume are intended to supplement Shakespeare, not to supplant him. The latter would be not only presumptuous but no doubt ludicrous in its result. The intent here has been not substitution but simplification. An attempt has been made to render a current English paraphrase of the Elizabethan text. The original language and word-order of Shakespeare have been modified as little as possible to make the meaning absolutely clear. In the Introduction the essence of classic criticism with respect to the eternal Hamlet problem has been briefly reviewed, but, more important than that, the very latest Hamlet criticism, somewhat condensed to be sure, has been included, notably that of Freud, Masefield, Lowes, Kittredge, and Neilson and Thorndike. The Freudian Hamlet is particularly interesting in this twentieth century in view of the world-wide interest in psychoanalysis manifested at present, and the constant trend in modern psychology toward the behaviouristic.

In the preparation of this work due and constant reference has been made to the principal accepted editions of Shakespeare circulating in the English-speaking countries at present, notably the monumental Variorum of Furness (1877), the Globe of Clark and Wright (1864), the Clarendon (second edition) of the same editors (1871), the Arden of Dowden, the Lake of Neilson, the Tudor of Neilson and Thorndike, the Warwick of Chambers, the universal Hudson, the Booklover's of Gollancz, the Rolfe, Abbott's justly celebrated Shakespearian Grammar, and to the etymological dictionaries of Skeat and Murray. Many of these works were made accessible through the kindness of attendants in the Harvard College Library, and the Harper Memorial Library of the University of Chicago. To Woodworth's Book Shop, Chicago, the author feels a debt of gratitude. To George Lyman Kittredge, professor of English at Harvard, one of the greatest teachers of Shakespeare in the United States, and to President William Allan Neilson, of Smith College, also former professor of English at Harvard, the author owes a debt of inspiration and stimulation in the study of Elizabethan English. To John Matthews Manly,

head of the English department, emeritus, at the University of Chicago, also a celebrated teacher of Shakespeare, thanks are due for several suggestions utilized in the present volume.

H. M.

January, 1922.

## INTRODUCTION



## THE PLAY

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

<p><i>Claudius</i>, King of Denmark.  <i>Hamlet</i>, son to the late, and nephew to the present King.  <i>Polonius</i>, Prime Minister.  <i>Horatio</i>, friend of Hamlet.  <i>Laertes</i>, son of Polonius.  <i>Voltimand</i>,  <i>Cornelius</i>,  <i>Rosencrantz</i>,  <i>Guildestern</i>,  <i>Osric</i>,  <i>A Gentleman</i>,  <i>A Priest</i>.</p>	<p><i>Marcellus</i>,  <i>Bernardo</i>, } Officers.  <i>Francisco</i>, a soldier.  <i>Reynaldo</i>, servant of Polonius.  <i>Players</i>.  <i>Two Clowns</i>, grave-diggers.  <i>Fortinbras</i>, prince of Norway.  <i>A Captain</i>.  <i>English Ambassadors</i>.  <i>Gertrude</i>, Queen of Denmark, and mother of Hamlet.  <i>Ophelia</i>, daughter of Polonius.</p>
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Lords, Ladies, Officers, Soldiers, Sailors,  
Messengers, and other Attendants.

*Ghost of Hamlet's Father.*

*Scene: Elsinore, Denmark.*

# THE MODERN READER'S *HAMLET*

## ACT I

*Scene 1. Elsinore. A platform before the castle.  
Francisco at his post. Enter Bernardo.*

*Bernardo.* Who's there?

*Francisco.* Nay, answer *me*; stand, and reveal your <sup>unfused</sup> identity. *self*

*Bernardo.* Long live the king!

*Francisco.* Bernardo?

*Bernardo.* It is he.

*Francisco.* You come most promptly upon your hour.

*Bernardo.* It has just struck twelve; get you to bed,  
Francisco.

*Francisco.* For this relief much thanks; it is bitter  
cold;

And I am sick at heart.

*Bernardo.* Have you had a quiet guard?

*Francisco.* Not a mouse stirring.

*Bernardo.* Well, good night.

If you meet Horatio and Marcellus,

The sharers of my watch, bid them make haste.

*Francisco.* I think I hear them.—Stand, ho! Who  
is there?

*Enter Horatio and Marcellus*

*Horatio.* Friends to this ground.

*Marcellus.* And loyal subjects of the Dane.

*Francisco.* I bid you good night, and God be with you.

*Marcellus.* O, farewell, honest soldier;

Who has relieved you?

*Francisco.* Bernardo has my place.

Good night, and God be with you.

(*Exit*)

*Marcellus.* Holla! Bernardo!

*Bernardo.* Say,—

What, is Horatio there?

*Horatio.* A piece of him.

*Bernardo.* Welcome, Horatio;—welcome, good Marcellus.

*Marcellus.* What, has this thing appeared again to-night?

*Bernardo.* I have seen nothing.

*Marcellus.* Horatio says it is but our imagination,

And will not admit it to his own belief

Concerning this dread sight, twice seen by us;

Therefore I have entreated him to come

With us to watch the minutes of this night,

So that if again this apparition should come,

He may confirm our eyes and speak to it.

*Horatio.* Tush, tush, it will not appear.

*Bernardo.* Sit down awhile;

And let us once again assail <sup>1</sup> your ears,

That are so fortified <sup>2</sup> against our story,

As to what we have seen the past two nights.

*Horatio.* Well, suppose we sit down,

And let us hear Bernardo speak of this.

*Bernardo.* Last night of all,

When that same star yonder that's westward from the pole-star

Had made his course to illuminate that part of heaven

Where now it burns, Marcellus and myself,

The bell then striking one,—

<sup>1, 2</sup> Bernardo, being a professional soldier, is made by Shakespeare to use the lingo of his profession.



*Enter Ghost*

*Marcellus.* Peace, break thou off; look, there it comes again!

*Bernardo.* In the same figure, like the king that's dead.

*Marcellus.* Thou art a scholar; speak to it, Horatio.

*Bernardo.* Does it not look like the king? mark it, Horatio.

*Horatio.* Most like him; it harasses me with fear and wonder.

*Bernardo.* It wishes to be spoken to.

*Marcellus.* Speak to it, Horatio.

*Horatio.* What art thou that thus invades the night, Usurping that fair and warlike form

In which our buried majesty of Denmark

Formerly did march? by heaven, I charge thee, speak!

*Marcellus.* It is offended.

*Bernardo.* See, it stalks away!

*Horatio.* Stay! speak, speak! I charge thee, speak!

*(Exit Ghost).*

*Marcellus.* 'Tis gone, and will not answer.

*Bernardo.* How now, Horatio! you tremble and look pale;

Is not this something more than fantasy?

What do you think of it?

*Horatio.* Before my God, I could not believe this Without the sense-informing and true confirmation Of my own eyes.

*Marcellus.* Is it not like the king?

*Horatio.* As you are like your own self:

Such was the very armour he had on

When he the ambitious king of Norway combated;

So frowned he once, when in angry parley

He smote the sledged Poles on the ice.

'Tis strange.

*Marcellus.* Thus twice before, and just at this dead hour,

With military walk has he gone by our watch.

*Horatio.* What particular line of thought to follow I know not;

But, speaking in a general way, my opinion is That this forebodes some strange upheaval in our state.

*Marcellus.* Come now, sit down, and tell me, he who knows,

Why this same strict and most observant watch Causes nightly so to toil the subjects of the land, And why such daily casting of brazen cannon, And foreign marketing for implements of war; Why such impressment of shipbuilders, whose heavy task

Does not distinguish Sunday from the week-day.

What can be imminent, that this sweaty haste

Makes night fellow-labourer with the day?

Who can inform me?

*Horatio.* I can do that;

At least, so the whisper goes. Our last king, Whose image just even now appeared to us, Was, as you know, by Fortinbras of Norway, Spurred thereto by a most emulative pride, Challenged to a final combat; in which our valiant Hamlet,—

For so this side of the known world considered him,—

Slew Fortinbras; who, by a sealed covenant, Well ratified by the uses of law and heraldry, Forfeited, along with his life, all those lands Which he stood possessed of, to the conqueror: Against the which a portion of equal value Was staked by our king; which would have been returned

To the inheritance of Fortinbras,

Had he been vanquisher ; likewise, by the same covenant  
And purport of the document as drawn up,  
His would fall to Hamlet. Now, sir, young Fortinbras,  
Of untempered spirit hot and full,  
Has in the outskirts of Norway here and there  
Mustered indiscriminately a band of desperadoes,  
For no pay but their keep, to some undertaking  
Involving stubborn courage ; which is no other,—  
As plainly is apparent to our government,—  
Except to recover from us, by strong hand  
And forcible terms, those aforesaid lands  
So by his father lost : and this, I take it,  
Is the main motive of our preparations,  
The source of this our watch, and the chief reason  
For this post-haste and turmoil in the land.

*Bernardo.* I think it may be no other than just so.  
Well may it suit your theory that this ominous figure  
Comes armed through our watch, so like the king  
That was and is the cause of these wars.

*Horatio.* A small particle it is to trouble the mind's  
eye.

In the highest and most flourishing state of Rome,  
A little before the most mighty Julius fell,  
The graves stood tenantless and the sheeted dead  
Squeaked and gibbered in the streets of Rome :  
(And there were other fearful sights)  
Such as comets and dews of blood,  
Evil influences in the sun ; and the moon,  
The governess of the ocean tides,  
Was darkened like at judgment day with eclipse :  
And likewise similar portents of terrible events,  
Like messengers always preceding the fates,  
And the prologue to the calamity coming on,  
Heaven and earth have together demonstrated  
To these regions and our countrymen.

*Re-enter Ghost*

But, soft, behold! look, here it comes again!  
 I'll cross its path even though it blight me. Stay, illusion!

If thou canst make a sound or use thy voice,  
 Speak to me;  
 If there can any good thing be done,  
 That may bring ease to thee and grace to me,  
 Speak to me;  
 If thou art admitted to secret information concerning  
 thy country's fate,  
 Which lucky foreknowledge may help to avoid,  
 O, speak!  
 Or if thou hast hoarded up in thy life  
 Unjustly wrung treasure in the depths of earth,  
 For which, they say, you spirits oft walk in death,

*(The cock crows.)*

Speak of it; stay, and speak! Stop it, Marcellus!

*Marcellus.* Shall I strike at it with my spear?

*Horatio.* Do, if it will not stand.

*Bernardo.* 'Tis here!

*Horatio.* 'Tis here!

*Marcellus.* 'Tis gone!

We do it wrong, being so majestic,

To make toward it a show of violence;

For it is, as the air, invulnerable,

And our vain blows malicious mockery.

*Bernardo.* It was about to speak when the cock  
 crowed.

*Horatio.* And then it started like a guilty thing

At a startling summons. I have heard,

The cock, that is trumpeter to the morning,

With his lofty and shrill-sounding throat

Awakens the god of day; and at his warning,

Whether in sea or fire, in earth or air,

The roaming and wandering spirit hastens  
To its place of confinement: and of the truth of this,  
This present object afforded proof.

*Marcellus.* It faded at the crowing of the cock.  
Some say, that always when that season comes  
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,  
The bird of dawn crows all night long;  
And then, they say, no spirit can walk abroad;  
The nights are wholesome; then no planets smite,  
No fairy enchants, nor witch has power to charm;  
So sacred and so blessed is the time.

*Horatio.* So I have heard, and do, in part, believe it.  
But, look, the morn, in russet mantle clad,  
Walks over the dew of yon high eastern hill.  
Let us conclude our watch; and, by my advice,  
Let us impart what we have seen tonight  
To young Hamlet; for, upon my life,  
This spirit, dumb to us, will speak to him.  
Do you consent that we acquaint him with it,  
Necessary since we love him, and corresponding with  
our duty?

*Marcellus.* Let's do it, pray; and I know this morning  
The place convenient to us all where we shall find him.

*Scene 2. A Room of State in the Castle.*

*Flourish. Enter the King, Queen, Hamlet, Polonius,  
Laertes, Voltimand, Cornelius, Lords, and  
Attendants.*

*King.* Though of our dear brother Hamlet's death  
The memory be green, and though it befitted us  
To bear our hearts in grief, and our whole kingdom  
To be united in a single expression of woe,  
Yet discretion has thus far fought with natural feeling,  
That we with sorrow together think of him,

But wisely with remembrance of ourselves.  
 Therefore our former sister-in-law, now our queen,  
 The imperial joint-possessor of this warlike state,  
 We have, as it were with a frustrated joy,—  
 With one eye cheerful and one sorrowful,  
 With mirth in funeral and dirge in marriage,  
 In balanced scales weighing delight and doleful-  
 ness,—

Taken as wife; nor in this have we excluded  
 Your own best judgments, which have fully approved  
 The course of this affair. For all, you have our thanks.  
 Now follows what you already know: young

Fortinbras,

Holding a poor opinion of our strength,  
 Or thinking because of our late dear brother's death  
 Our state to be disjointed and disordered,  
 Added to the illusion of his superiority,  
 Has not failed to pester us with messages  
 Referring to the surrender of those lands  
 Which his father legally lost  
 To our most valiant brother. So much for him.  
 Now for ourselves and for this time of meeting.  
 Thus much the business is: we have written here  
 To the king of Norway, uncle of young Fortin-  
 bras,—

Who, powerless and bed-ridden, hardly hears  
 Of this purpose of his nephew's,—to check  
 His further progress therein; inasmuch as the money  
 levies,

The enlistment of men, and complete quotas, are made  
 wholly

From among his subjects; and we here dispatch  
 You, good Cornelius, and you, Voltimand,  
 As bearers of this greeting to the old Norwegian king;  
 Giving you no further personal power  
 To negotiate with the king, than the extent

Of these detailed articles may allow.

Farewell, and let your speed evince your dutifulness.

*Cornelius.* } In that and in all else shall we show our  
*Voltimand.* } dutifulness.

*King.* We doubt it not at all; heartily farewell.

(*Exeunt Voltimand and Cornelius.*)

And now, Laertes, what's the news with you?

You told us of some petition; what is it, Laertes?

You cannot speak with reason to the chief Dane,

And ask in vain; what wouldst thou beg, Laertes,

That I should not be glad to offer, let alone thy asking?

The head is not more closely related to the heart,

The hand more necessary to the mouth,

Than the throne of Denmark is to thy father.

What wouldst thou have, Laertes?

*Laertes.* My dread lord, your kind leave to return to  
France;

Whence, although I came willingly to Denmark,

To show my duty in being present at your coronation,

Yet now, I must confess, that duty done,

My thoughts and wishes revert again to France,

And I bow them to your kind leave and permission.

*King.* Have you your father's leave? What says  
Polonius?

*Polonius.* He hath, my lord, wrested from me slowly  
my permission

By elaborate petition, and finally

I placed the seal of my difficult-won consent;

I do beseech you, give him leave to go.

*King.* Seize your most favourable opportunity,

Laertes; may time be your own,

And your best graces help you spend it as you will!

But now, my nephew Hamlet, and my son,—

*Hamlet.* (*Aside*) A little more than kindred, and  
less than human-kind.

*King.* How is it that the clouds still hang on you?

*Hamlet.* Not so, my lord; rather, I am too much in the sun.

*Queen.* Good Hamlet, cast thy mourning colour off,  
And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.

Do not forever with thy lowered eyelids

Seek for thy noble father in the dust.

Thou know'st 'tis a common thing; everything that  
lives must die,

Passing through existence in nature to eternity.

*Hamlet.* Yes, madam, it is common.

*Queen.* If it be common,

Why seems it so particular with thee?

*Hamlet.* Seems, madam! nay, it is; I know not  
'seems.'

'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother,  
Nor habitually worn suits of sombre black,  
Nor the breaking forth of heavy sighs,  
No, nor the abundant flow of streaming tears,  
Nor the downcast expression of the countenance,  
Together with all the forms, moods, and displays of  
grief,

That can set me forth truly; these indeed seem,

For they are actions a man might feign:

But I have that sorrow which surpasseth show;

These but the external evidences of woe.

*King.* 'Tis sweet and commendable in your nature,  
Hamlet,

To render these mourning duties to your father:

But, as you know, your father also lost a father,

That lost father lost his: and of course the survivor  
was bound,

In filial obligation, for some time

To funereal sorrow: but to persist

Obstinately in mourning is a course

Of impious stubbornness; it is unmanly grief;

It shows a will most unsubmissive to heaven,



A heart unfortified, a mind without patience,  
An understanding foolish and undisciplined:  
For that which we know is inevitable and is as common  
As anything which is most ordinarily perceived,  
Why should we in our peevish opposition  
So take it to heart? Fie! 'tis a fault before heaven,  
A fault against the dead themselves, a fault before  
nature,

To the faculty of reason most absurd, which has for  
a common theme,

The death of fathers, and which has ever cried  
From the first death to that which has just occurred,  
'This needs must be.' We pray you, cast aside  
This unavailing grief, and think of me  
As your own father; for, let the world take note,  
You are next in succession to the throne,  
And with no less distinguished degree of love  
Than that which dearest father bears toward his son,  
Do I impart love to you. As to your intention  
Of going back to school in Wittenberg, ✓  
It is most contrary to our desires;  
And we beseech you, incline yourself to remain  
Here in the cheer and comfort of our presence,  
As our chiefest courtier, kinsman, and son.

*Queen.* Let not thy mother lose her prayers, Hamlet:  
I pray thee, stay with us; go not to Wittenberg.

*Hamlet.* I shall obey you to the utmost, madam.

*King.* Why, 'tis a loving and an excellent reply;  
Be like ourself in Denmark. Madam, come;  
This courteous and voluntary acquiescence of Hamlet  
Warms my heart: in proof of which,  
No riotous health that the king drinks today,  
But shall be told by cannon salute to the clouds,  
So that the king's bumper the heavens shall noise  
abroad,

Re-echoing earthly thunder. Come away.

(*Flourish. Exeunt all but Hamlet.*)

*Hamlet.* O, that this too, too solid flesh would melt,  
 Thaw, and dissolve itself into a dew!  
 Or that the Everlasting had not sealed  
 His authority against self-slaughter! O God! O God!  
 How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable  
 Seem to me all the customs of this world!  
 Fie on 't! O fie! 'tis an unweeded garden,  
 That grows up to seed; things rank and coarse in nature  
 Possess it entirely. That it should come to this!  
 But two months dead! No, not so much, not two;  
 So excellent a king; that was, compared to this one,  
 As Hyperion is like a satyr; so loving to my mother  
 That he could not permit the winds of heaven  
 To visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth!  
 Must I remember? why she would cling to him  
 As though her affection constantly increased  
 By inseparable companionship; and yet, within a  
 month,—  
 Let me not think of it,—Frailty, thy name is  
 woman!—

A little month, or before those shoes were old  
 With which she followed my poor father's body,  
 Like *Niobe*, all in tears,—why, she, even she,—  
 O God! a beast, without the power of reason,  
 Would have mourned longer,—married my uncle,  
 My father's brother; but no more like my father  
 Than I am like to Hercules. Within a month,  
 Before the salt of hypocritical tears  
 Had ceased their gushing in her inflamed eyes,  
 She married. O, most wicked speed, to haste  
 With such celerity to incestuous sheets!  
 It is not nor it cannot come to good:

But break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue!

(*Enter Horatio, Marcellus, and Bernardo*)

*Horatio.* Hail to your lordship!

*Hamlet.* I am glad to see you well:  
 Horatio!—I am forgetting myself.

*Horatio.* Even the same, my lord, and your poor servant as ever.

*Hamlet.* Sir, you are my good friend; I'll exchange that name with you:

And what are you doing away from Wittenberg, Horatio?—

Marcellus?

*Marcellus.* My good lord,—

*Hamlet.* I am very glad to see you. (*To Bernardo.*)

Good even, sir.

But what, in faith, are you doing away from Wittenberg?

*Horatio.* Developing a truant disposition, my good lord.

*Hamlet.* I would not hear your enemy say so;

Nor shall you do my ear such violence,

To make it a believer of your own report

Against yourself; I know well that you are no truant.

But what is your business in Elsinore?

We'll teach you to drink deep ere you depart.

*Horatio.* My lord, I came to attend your father's funeral.

*Hamlet.* I pray thee, do not mock me, fellow-student;

I think it was to see my mother's wedding.

*Horatio.* Indeed, my lord, it followed soon after.

*Hamlet.* Thrift! thrift! Horatio,—the funeral-baked meats

Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables.

Would I had met my most heartfelt foe in heaven

Than to have lived to see that day, Horatio!

My father,—I think I see my father.

*Horatio.* O where, my lord?

*Hamlet.* In my mind's eye, Horatio.

*Horatio.* I saw him,—once; he was a goodly king.

*Hamlet.* He was a man; take him for all in all,

I shall not look upon his like again.

*Horatio.* My lord, I think I saw him last night.

*Hamlet.* Saw? whom?

*Horatio.* My lord, the king your father.

*Hamlet.* The king my father!

*Horatio.* Control your amazement for awhile

With an attentive ear until I can report,

With the corroboration of these gentlemen,

This marvelous thing to you.

*Hamlet.* For God's love, let me hear.

*Horatio.* For two nights together had these gentlemen,

Marcellus and Bernardo, during their watch,

Amid the dead vacancy of the night,

Been thus encountered. A figure like your father,

Armed completely and exactly from head to foot,

Appears before them, and with solemn march,

Slow and stately, goes before them; three times thus

Before their oppressed and fearful eyes,

Within his short staff's length; while they, melted

Almost to jelly by the effect of fear,

Stand dumb, and speak not to him. This to me

In awe-struck secrecy they did impart;

And I with them the third night kept the watch:

Where, just as they had reported, both as to time,

And as to the form of the thing, each word sustained  
by fact,

The apparition comes. I knew your father;

These hands are not more alike.

*Hamlet.* But where was this?

*Marcellus.* My lord, upon the platform where we  
watched.

*Hamlet.* Did you not speak to it?

*Horatio.* My lord, I did;

But answer made it none; yet once I thought

It lifted up its head and did address

Itself to motion, as though it would speak;

But just then the morning cock crowed loudly,

And at the sound it shrank in haste away,

And vanished from our sight.

*Hamlet.*

It is very strange.

*Horatio.* As I do live, my honoured lord, it is true;  
And we thought it obligatory in our duty  
To let you know of it.

*Hamlet.* Indeed, indeed, sirs, but this troubles me.  
Hold you the watch tonight?

*Marcellus.* { We do, my lord.

*Bernardo.* }

*Hamlet.* Was it armed, did you say?

*Marcellus.* { Armed, my lord.

*Bernardo.* }

*Hamlet.* From top to toe?

*Marcellus.* { My lord, from head to foot.

*Bernardo.* }

*Hamlet.* Then saw you not his face?

*Horatio.* O, yes, my lord; he wore his beaver up.

*Hamlet.* What, did he look frowningly?

*Horatio.* A countenance more in sorrow than in anger.

*Hamlet.* Pale, or red?

*Horatio.* Nay, very pale.

*Hamlet.* And fixed his eyes on you?

*Horatio.* Most constantly.

*Hamlet.* I wish I had been there.

*Horatio.* It would have amazed you much.

*Hamlet.* Very likely, very likely. Stayed it long?

*Horatio.* While one with moderate speed might count  
a hundred.

*Marcellus.* { Longer, longer.

*Bernardo.* }

*Horatio.* Not when I saw it.

*Hamlet.* His beard was grizzled? No?

*Horatio.* It was, as I have seen it in his life,  
Dark, streaked with grey.

*Hamlet.* I will watch tonight.

Perhaps it will walk again.

*Horatio.* I warrant you it will.

*Hamlet.* If it assume my noble father's person,  
I'll speak to it, though hell itself should open  
And bid me hold my tongue. I beseech you all,  
If you have hitherto concealed this sight,  
Keep it retained in your silence still;  
And whatsoever else shall happen tonight,  
Observe it, but do not mention it.  
I will repay your friendship. So, farewell;  
Upon the platform, between eleven and twelve,  
I'll visit you.

*All.* Our duty to your honor.

*Hamlet.* Your regards to me, as mine to you; farewell.

*(Exeunt Horatio, Marcellus, and Bernardo.)*

*Hamlet.* My father's spirit,—in arms! All is not well;

I suspect some foul play: I wish the night were come!  
Till then sit still, my soul. Foul deeds will rise,  
Though all the earth overwhelm them, to men's eyes.

*(Exit)*

*Scene 3. A room in Polonius's house.*

*Enter Laertes and Ophelia.*

*Laertes.* My necessities are embarked; farewell.  
And, sister, according as the winds are favourable  
And the means of conveyance, also, do not be neglectful,

But let me hear from you.

*Ophelia.* Do you doubt that?

*Laertes.* As for Hamlet, and the trifling of his favour,  
Consider it but a whim and an impulse of youth,—  
A transient violet in the springtime of youth,—  
Premature, not permanent, sweet, not lasting,  
Perfume for the gratification of the moment;  
Not more.

*Ophelia.* No more than that?

*Laertes.* Consider it no more;

For nature, when growing, grows not alone  
In sinews and physical bulk, but, as the body increases,  
The judgment of the mind and soul  
Grows in proportion. Perhaps he loves you now;  
And now no stain or deceit besmirches  
The virtue of his intentions; but you must fear,  
Taking his high rank into consideration, his will is not  
his own;

For he himself is subject to the dignity of his position.  
He may not, as unpedigreed persons do,  
Choose for himself, for on his choice depends  
The safety and welfare of all Denmark;  
And therefore must his choice be subject  
To the vote and consent of that body politic  
Whereof he is the head. Then, if he says he loves you,  
It befits your wisdom to believe it  
Only so far as he in his peculiar situation  
May be able to execute his promises; which is no  
further

Than the main voice of Denmark lends approval.  
Then weigh well what loss your honour may sustain,  
If with too confiding ear you listen to his songs,  
Or lose your heart, or lay your chastity open  
To his unbridled solicitation.

Fear it, Ophelia, fear it, my dear sister,  
And stay in the rear of your affection,  
Out of the range and danger of desire.  
The most scrupulous maid is prodigal enough  
When she but unmask her beauty to the moon.  
Virtue itself escapes not slanderous strokes;  
The canker blights the tender plants of spring,  
Too often before their buds be opened;  
And in the morn and liquid dew of youth  
Destructive blights are then most imminent.  
Be wary, then; the best safety lies in fear:

Youth rebels against itself, though no tempter be near.  
*Ophelia.* I shall the substance of this good lesson keep,  
 As a watchman to my heart. But, my dear brother,  
 Do not, as some graceless pastors do,  
 Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven,  
 While like a puffed and reckless libertine,  
 Himself the primrose path of indulgence treads,  
 And takes not his own advice.  
*Laertes.* O, fear not for me.

*Enter Polonius*

I tarry too long; but here my father comes.  
 A second farewell blessing is a second favour;  
 Opportunity now provides this.  
*Polonius.* Still here, Laertes? aboard, aboard, for  
 shame!  
 The wind blows steadily against your sail,  
 And you are causing delay. There; my blessing with  
 you!

*(Laying his hand on Laertes's head)*

And these few precepts see that you inscribe—  
 Upon your memory. Give your thoughts no voice,  
 Nor any inappropriate thought hasty execution.  
 Be friendly, but by no means common.  
 The friends you have, tested by experience,  
 Grapple them to your soul with hoops of steel;  
 But do not dull your handshake by freely welcoming  
 Every new-made, untried comrade. Beware  
 Of starting a quarrel; but, once being in,  
 Conduct yourself that your opponent shall beware.  
 Give every man your ear, but few your voice;  
 Receive every man's opinion, but reserve final judgment.  
 Costly your dress as your purse can buy,  
 Fine in quality but not of gaudy pattern;  
 For the apparel oft proclaims the man;  
 And in France those of the best rank and station



Especially are particular and well-bred in this.  
Neither a borrower nor a lender be;  
For a loan often loses both itself and the friend,  
And borrowing dulls the edge of economy.  
This, above all: be true to your own self first,  
And it will follow as the night, the day,  
That you never then can be false to any man.  
Farewell; my blessing influence all this in you.  
*Laertes.* Most humbly I do take my leave, my lord.  
*Polonius.* The time invites; go, your servants wait.  
*Laertes.* Farewell, Ophelia; and remember well  
What I have said to you.  
*Ophelia.* It is in my memory locked,  
And you yourself shall hold the key of it.  
*Laertes.* Farewell.

(Exit)

*Polonius.* What is it, Ophelia, that he has said to you?

*Ophelia.* If you please, something concerning Lord Hamlet.

*Polonius.* By the Virgin,—very timely.

It is reported to me he has very oft of late

Given you much time privately, and that you yourself

Have of your audience been most free and bounteous.

If it be true,—and so it is told to me,

And that by way of warning,—I must tell you,

You do not understand your situation as clearly

As it behooves my daughter and your honour.

What is going on between you two? tell me the truth.

*Ophelia.* He has, my lord, lately made many tenders  
Of affection toward me.

*Polonius.* Affection! pooh! you speak like a green girl.

Inexperienced amid such perilous circumstances.

Do you believe his—tenders, as you call them?

*Ophelia.* I do not know, my lord, what I should think.

*Polonius.* By the Virgin, then I'll teach you; think  
yourself a baby,

That you have taken these tenders for true pay,  
Which are not sterling. Tender yourself less cheaply;  
Or—not to override the poor proverb

By running it thus,—you'll tender me a fool.

*Ophelia.* My lord, he has urged his love upon me  
In an honourable fashion.

*Polonius.* Yes, fashion you may call it; go to, go to.

*Ophelia.* And has given the appearance of reality to  
his language

With almost all the holy vows of heaven.

*Polonius.* Yes, snares to catch simpletons. I know  
myself,

When the blood burns, how extravagantly the soul  
Lends vows to the tongue; these flashes, daughter,

Emitting more light than heat, containing neither

As they seem to promise while leaping up,

You must not take for flames. From this time,  
daughter,

Be somewhat scanter of your maiden presence;

Set your interviews at a higher rate

Than a mere demand for a hearing. As for Lord  
Hamlet,

Believe this much about him: he is young,

And with a larger tether may he walk

Than may be given to you. In short, Ophelia,

Do not believe his vows; for they are procurers,

Not of that true colour which their garments suggest,

But mere implorers of unholy suits,

Sounding like sanctified and pious bonds,

The better to deceive. This once for all:

I do not want, in plain terms, from this time forth

You to misuse any leisure moment

In having words or talk with the Lord Hamlet.

Look to it, I charge you; come along.

*Ophelia.* I shall obey, my lord.

(*Exeunt*)

*Scene 4. The platform.  
Enter Hamlet, Horatio, and Marcellus.*

*Hamlet.* The air bites keenly; it is very cold.

*Horatio.* It is a sharp and penetrating air.

*Hamlet.* What is the hour?

*Horatio.* I think it not quite twelve.

*Marcellus.* No, it has struck.

*Horatio.* Indeed? I heard it not; then the time draws  
near

Wherein the spirit is accustomed to walk.

*(A flourish of trumpets, and ordnance shot off, within.)*

What does this mean, my lord?

*Hamlet.* The king sits late tonight, and takes his  
draught,

Holds carousal, and through the up-spring reels;

And, as he drains his draughts of Rhenish down,

The kettle-drum and trumpet bellow forth

The triumphant reception of his pledge.

*Horatio.* Is it a custom?

*Hamlet.* Yes, by the Virgin, it is;

But to my mind, though I am native here

And to the customs born, this is a custom

More honoured in the breaking than in the keeping.

This heavy-headed revel makes us everywhere

Censured and slandered by other nations:

They call us drunkards and likewise swine,

Thus tarnishing our honour; and indeed it detracts

From our achievements, though performed with highest  
distinction,

The very pith and marrow of our reputation.

Likewise, it often happens with individual men,

That for some vicious constitutional blemish,

As, in their birth,—and here they are not guilty,

Since nature cannot choose its origin,—  
By an excess of some constitutional tendency,  
Often breaking through the fences and forts of reason;  
Or by some natural habit that too much overcomes  
The outward form of pleasing manners, that these men,  
Carrying, I say, the deep impress of one defect,  
Being an inborn defect, or else accidental,—  
Their virtues otherwise,—be they as pure as grace,  
Infinite as man's nature may partake of,—  
Are sure nevertheless in the general opinion to be deeply  
tainted  
From that one particular fault; the dram of evil  
All the preponderant nobleness cancels  
And brings into ill-repute.

*Enter Ghost.*

*Horatio.* Look, my lord, it comes!

*Hamlet.* Angels and ministers of grace defend us!

Be thou a saved soul or a spirit lost;

Bring with thee zephyrs from heaven or blasts from  
hell;

Be thy intents wicked or charitable;

Thou com'st in such an inquiring shape

That I will speak to thee: I'll call thee Hamlet,

King, father, royal Dane; O, answer me!

Let me not burst in ignorance; but tell

Why thy consecrated bones, hearsed in death,

Have burst their shroud; why the sepulchre,

Wherein we saw thee quietly interred,

Hath opened his ponderous and marble jaws,

To cast thee up again! What can this mean,

That thou, dead corpse, again in complete armour,

Revisit'st thus the glimmering of the moon,

Making night hideous; and we, limited in natural  
understanding,

So to stagger in our comprehension  
With thoughts beyond our abilities to grasp?  
Say, why is this? wherefore? what ought we to do?

*Horatio.* It beckons you to go away with it,  
As if it did desire to make some communication  
To you alone.

*Marcellus.* Look, with what courteous action  
It waves you to more distant ground;  
But do not go with it.

*Horatio.* No, by no means.

*Hamlet.* It will not speak; then I will follow it.

*Horatio.* Do not, my lord.

*Hamlet.* Why, what should be the fear?  
I do not set my life at a pin's value;  
And, as for my soul, what can it do to that,  
Being immortal like itself?

It waves further again; I'll follow it.

*Horatio.* What if it tempt you toward the flood, my  
lord,

Or to the dreadful summit of the cliff  
That beetles over its base into the sea,  
And there assume some other horrible form,  
Which might deprive your reason of its sovereignty  
And draw you into madness? think not of it;  
The very place puts desperate fancies  
Without any other motive, into every brain  
That looks down many fathoms to the sea  
And hears it roar beneath.

*Hamlet.* It beckons me still.

Go on, I'll follow thee.

*Marcellus.* You shall not go, my lord.

*Hamlet.* Hold off your hands!

*Horatio.* Be ruled; you shall not go.

*Hamlet.* My fate cries out,  
And makes each petty sinew in this body  
As hard as the Nemean lion's muscle.

Still am I called. Unhand me, gentlemen;  
By heaven, I'll make a ghost of him who hinders me!  
I say, away! Go on; I'll follow thee!

*(Exeunt Ghost and Hamlet)*

*Horatio.* He grows desperate with fancy.

*Marcellus.* Let's follow; it is not proper to obey him  
thus.

*Horatio.* Let's after him. What will be the issue of  
this?

*Marcellus.* Something is rotten in the state of Den-  
mark.

*Horatio.* Heaven will direct the issue.

*Marcellus.* Rather, let us follow him.

*Scene 5. Another part of the platform.*

*Enter Ghost and Hamlet.*

*Hamlet.* Where wilt thou lead me? speak; I'll go no  
further.

*Ghost.* Mark my words.

*Hamlet.* I will.

*Ghost.* My hour is almost here,  
When I to sulphurous and tormenting flames  
Must give myself back.

*Hamlet.* Alas, poor ghost!

*Ghost.* Pity me not, but give serious attention  
To what I am about to reveal.

*Hamlet.* Speak; I am ready to hear.

*Ghost.* So will you be to revenge, when you have  
heard.

*Hamlet.* What?

*Ghost.* I am your father's spirit,  
Doomed for a limited time to walk at night,  
And during the day confined to fasting in fires,

Until the foul offenses committed in my natural life  
Are burned and purged away. But for the fact I am  
forbidden

To tell the secrets of my prison-house,  
I could a tale unfold the slightest word of which  
Would harrow up your soul, freeze your youthful  
blood,

Make your two eyes start out of their sockets,  
Your tangled locks to part,  
And each individual hair to stand on end,  
Like quills upon the fretful porcupine;  
But this revelation of eternity must not be  
To ears of flesh and blood. Listen, O listen!  
If ever you did your dear father love——

*Hamlet.* O God!

*Ghost.* Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.

*Hamlet.* Murder!

*Ghost.* Murder most foul, the best that may be said;  
But this of all most foul, strange, and unnatural.

*Hamlet.* Hasten to inform me, that I, with wings as  
swift

As meditation or the thoughts of love,  
May sweep to my revenge.

*Ghost.* I find thee quick to respond;  
Yet duller wouldst thou be than the sense-dulling weed  
That roots itself in idleness on Lethe's banks,  
Wert thou unwilling to stir in this affair. Now, Ham-  
let, hear,

It has been circulated that I, while sleeping in my  
garden,

Was bitten by a snake; and thus the ear of all Denmark  
Is by a false official bulletin of my death  
Rankly deceived; but know, thou noble youth,  
The snake that stung thy father's life away  
Now wears his crown.

*Hamlet.* O my prophetic soul!  
My uncle!

*Ghost.* Yes, that incestuous and adulterous beast,  
By the witchcraft of his cunning, with treacherous  
gifts—

O wicked craft and gifts, that have the power  
So to seduce!—won to his shameful lust  
The will of my apparently virtuous queen.  
O Hamlet, what a falling-off was there!  
From me, whose love of lofty dignity  
Was a fulfilment of the vow  
Which I made to her in marriage; and to sink  
Down to the level of a wretch, whose natural gifts  
were poor

Compared to mine!

But just as virtue, ever incorruptible  
Though lewdness court it in a heavenly form,  
So lust, though to a radiant angel linked,  
Will both satiate itself in a celestial bed  
And prey on garbage.  
But, soft! I scent the morning air;  
I must be brief. Sleeping within the garden,  
My custom always in the afternoon,  
Upon my unguarded hour your uncle stole,  
With the juice of cursed hebenon in a vial,  
And in the openings of my ears did pour  
The leprous distillation, the effect of which  
Holds such antagonism to human blood  
That swift as quicksilver it courses through  
The natural cavities and canals of the body;  
And with sudden power it coagulates  
And curdles, like acid drops in milk,  
The thin and healthful blood; so did it mine;  
And an instantaneous eruption covered like bark,  
In a leprous fashion, with a vile and loathsome crust,  
All my smooth body.

Thus was I, sleeping, by a brother's hand  
Of life, of crown, of queen, at once bereft;



Cut off before my sins had borne just fruitage,  
Without communion, preparation, or extreme unction;  
No reckoning made, but sent to my accounting  
With all my imperfections on my head.

*Hamlet.* O, horrible! O, horrible! most horrible!

*Ghost.* If you have natural feeling, do not endure it;  
Let not the royal bed of Denmark be  
A couch of lust and damned incest.

But, in whatever manner you proceed,  
Taint not your mind, nor let your soul contrive  
Anything against your mother; leave her to heaven,  
And to those thorns that lodge in her bosom  
To pain and sting her. Farewell at once!

The glow-worm shows the morning to be near,  
And begins to pale its ineffective light.

Adieu, adieu, adieu! remember me. *(Exit)*

*Hamlet.* O all you host of heaven! O earth! what  
else?

And shall I couple hell? O, fie! Hold, hold, my heart;  
And you, my sinews, grow not instantly old,  
But bear me stiffly up. Remember thee!

Yes, thou poor ghost, while memory holds her seat  
In this distracted head. Remember thee!

Yes, from the tablet of my memory  
I'll erase away all foolish impressions,  
All proverbs from books, all past impressions,  
Which youthful observation copied there;  
And thy command alone shall live

Within the book and volume of my brain,  
Unmixed with baser matter: yes, yes, by heaven!

O most pernicious woman!

O villain, villain, smiling, damned villain!

My memorandum tablets!—it is fit that I set it down,  
That one may smile, and smile, yet be a villain;  
At least I'm sure it may be so in Denmark. *(Writes)*

So, uncle, there you are. Now to my motto;

It is, 'Adieu, adieu! remember me';  
I have sworn to it.

*Horatio.* } (*Within*) My lord, my lord!

*Marcellus.* (*Within*) Lord Hamlet!

*Horatio.* (*Within*) Heaven secure him!

*Hamlet.* So be it!

*Marcellus.* (*Within*) Illo, ho, ho, my lord!

*Hamlet.* Hillo, ho, ho, boy! Come, bird, come.

*Enter Horatio and Marcellus.*

*Marcellus.* How is everything, my noble lord?

*Horatio.* What news, my lord?

*Hamlet.* O, wonderful!

*Horatio.* My good lord, do tell it.

*Hamlet.* No; you'll reveal it.

*Horatio.* Not I, my lord, by heaven!

*Marcellus.* Nor I, my lord.

*Hamlet.* How say you, then,—would heart of man  
ever believe it?

But you'll keep it secret?

*Horatio.*

*Marcellus.* } Yes, by heaven, my lord.

*Hamlet.* There's not a villain dwelling anywhere in  
Denmark

But that's a notorious rogue!

*Horatio.* No ghost need come from the grave, my  
lord,

To tell us this.

*Hamlet.* Why, right; you have said rightly;

And so, without more beating about at all,

I hold it proper that we shake hands and part:

You, as your business and desire shall call you,—

For every man has business and desire,

Such as it is,—and, for my own poor part,

Mind you, I shall go pray.

*Horatio.* These are but wild and whirling words, my lord.

*Hamlet.* I'm sorry they offend you, heartily;  
Yes, faith, heartily.

*Horatio.* There's no offence, my lord.

*Hamlet.* Yes, by Saint Patrick, but there is, *Horatio*,  
And much offence, too. Concerning this vision,  
Let me tell you that it is a true and honourable ghost;  
As for your desire to know what is between us,  
Overcome it any way you can. And now, good friends,  
As truly as you are friends, scholars, and soldiers,  
Grant me one trifling request.

*Horatio.* What is it, my lord? We will.

*Hamlet.* Never make known what you have seen to-night.

*Horatio.* } My lord, we will not.  
*Marcellus.* }

*Hamlet.* Nay, but swear it.

*Horatio.* In faith,  
My lord, not I.

*Marcellus.* Nor I, my lord, in faith.

*Hamlet.* Indeed, upon my sword, indeed.

*Ghost. (Beneath)* Swear!

*Hamlet.* Ah, ha, boy! do you say so, too? Are you  
there, truepenny?

Come on; you hear this fellow in the basement!  
Consent to swear.

*Horatio.* Propose the oath, my lord.

*Hamlet.* Never to speak of what you have seen.  
Swear by my sword.

*Ghost (Beneath)* Swear!

*Hamlet.* Here and everywhere? Then we'll shift our  
ground.

Come hither, gentlemen,  
And lay your hands again upon my sword.  
Never to speak of this that you have heard,  
Swear by my sword.

*Ghost. (Beneath)* Swear!

*Hamlet.* Well said, old mole! can you work in the earth that fast?

A worthy digger! Once more let's move, good friends.

*Horatio.* O day and night! But this is wondrous strange.

*Hamlet.* And therefore give it welcome like to a stranger.<sup>3</sup>

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,  
Than are dreamt of in our philosophy.

But come:

Here, as before, never, so help you mercy,  
However oddly or strangely I conduct myself,—

For I perhaps hereafter may think it fit

x To assume an antic disposition,—

That you, at such times seeing me, never shall,

With arms folded thus, or this head shake,

Or by speaking out some ambiguous phrase,

As 'Well, well, we know,' or 'We could talk if we would,'

Or 'If we chose to speak,' or 'There are those, who could tell if they would,'

Or some such ambiguous giving away, to denote

That you know anything about my condition;—this not to do,

So grace and mercy at your need most help you,

Swear.

*Ghost (Beneath)* Swear!

*Hamlet.* Rest, rest, perturbed spirit! (*They swear*)

So, gentlemen,

With all my love I commend myself to you;

And what so poor a man as Hamlet is

May be able to do, to express his love and friendliness to you,

God willing, shall not be lacking. Let us go back together;

<sup>3</sup> That is, by asking no questions.

Ever a finger on your lips, I pray.  
The times are out of joint: O cursed spite,  
That ever I was born to set them right! ]  
No, come; let's go together.

## ACT II

### *Scene 1. A room in Polonius's house.*

*Enter Polonius and Reynaldo.*

*Polonius.* Give him this money and these notes,  
Reynaldo.

*Reynaldo.* I shall, my lord.

*Polonius.* You shall do marvellously wisely, good  
Reynaldo,

Before you visit him, to make inquiry  
Concerning his behaviour.

*Reynaldo.* My lord, I intended to.

*Polonius.* By the Virgin, well said,—very well said.  
Look you, sir,

Inquire first for me what Danes are living in Paris;  
How they live, who they are, their financial condition,  
and where they lodge;

Who their companions are, their living expenses; and  
finding

By guide and general drift of these inquiries,  
Whether they know my son, you will come closer to  
the point

Than any direct questions could do;

You assume, as it were, some distant knowledge of  
him;

As for instance, 'I know his father and his friends,  
And him slightly.' Do you mark this, Reynaldo?

*Reynaldo.* Yes, very well, my lord.

*Polonius.* 'And him slightly; but,' you may say, 'not  
very well:

But if it be he whom I have in mind, he's very wild,  
Addicted so and so'; and there lay to his charge  
What made-up tales you please; but, by the Virgin,  
none so gross

As to dishonour him; take heed of that;  
But, sir, such wanton, wild, and usual slips,  
Which are companions noted and most known  
To unbridled youth.

*Reynaldo.* As gambling, my lord?

*Polonius.* Yes, or drinking, duelling, swearing,  
quarreling,

Bad women,—you may go so far.

*Reynaldo.* My lord, that would dishonour him.

*Polonius.* Faith, no; because you can temper it in the  
charge.

You must not put a further scandal on him,  
That he is habitually rather than occasionally inconti-  
nent;

That's not my meaning: but whisper his faults so  
skilfully

That they may seem merely blemishes due to liberty,  
The volcanic flashes of a fiery mind,  
A savagery of untamed blood,  
Which attack youth everywhere.

*Reynaldo.* But, my good lord,—

*Polonius.* Why do I want you to do this?

*Reynaldo.* Yes, my lord,  
I would like to know that.

*Polonius.* By the Blessed Virgin, here's my drift,  
And I believe it a justifiable scheme:

Your charging to my son these light faults,  
As you would speak of an article soiled by use,  
Mark you,

If your party in conversation whom you want to sound,  
Has ever seen of the aforesaid crimes

The youth you speak of guilty, you may rest assured  
He will agree with your conclusions;

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going on to say, 'Good sir,' or 'friend,' or 'gentleman,'  
As accords with the idiom or title  
Of man and country.

*Reynaldo.* Very well, my lord.

*Polonius.* And then, sir, if he does this,—he does,—  
what was I about to say? By the mass, I was  
about to say something; where did I leave off?

*Reynaldo.* At 'agrees with your conclusions'; at  
'friend or so,' and 'gentleman.'

*Polonius.* At 'agrees with your conclusions,'—yes,  
yes, by the Virgin;

He may conclude thus: 'I know the gentleman;  
I saw him yesterday, or the other day,  
Or some other time, with such and such persons, and  
as you say,

There he was gambling, there overcome with liquor,  
And there falling out with an opponent at tennis'; or  
perhaps,

'I saw him enter a certain house of ill-fame.'

You just see

If your bait of falsehood does not catch this carp of  
truth;

And thus do we of wisdom and far-sight,  
By winding paths and with indirect angling,  
By indirect devices find direct information:

So by my present instruction and advice,  
Shall you my son. You have understood me, have  
you not?

*Reynaldo.* My lord, I have.

*Polonius.* God be with you! fare you well.

*Reynaldo.* And to you, my good lord.

*Polonius.* Observe his tendencies yourself personally.

*Reynaldo.* I shall do so, my lord.

*Polonius.* And let him proceed without interference.

*Reynaldo.* Very well, my lord.

*Polonius.* Farewell.



*Enter Ophelia*

How now, Ophelia! What's the matter?

*Ophelia.* O, my lord, my lord, I have been so frightened!

*Polonius.* With what, in God's name?

*Ophelia.* My lord, as I was sewing in my private room,  
Lord Hamlet, with his doublet all unfastened;  
No hat upon his head; his stockings besmirched,  
Ungartered, and slipped down to his ankles;  
Pale as his shirt; his knees knocking each other;  
And with a look as piteous in expression  
As if he had been loosened out of hell  
To speak of horrors, comes before me.

*Polonius.* Mad for your love?

*Ophelia.* My lord, I do not know,  
But truly I do fear so.

*Polonius.* What did he say?

*Ophelia.* He took me by the wrist and held me tightly;  
Then straightens out his arm,  
And, with his other hand thus shading his brow,  
He begins a close study of my face  
As though he were about to draw it. Long stayed  
he thus;

Finally, a little shaking of my arm,  
Three times his head thus waving up and down,  
He heaved a sigh so piteous and profound  
That it seemed to shatter his whole body  
And end his being: that done, he lets me go;  
And with his head over his shoulder turned  
He seemed to find his way without his eyes;  
For out of doors he went without their help,  
And to the last did bend their light on me.

*Polonius.* Come, go with me; I will go seek the king.  
This is the true insanity of love,  
Whose peculiar violence is only self-destructive

And leads the will to desperate undertakings,  
As often as any passion under heaven  
That afflicts human nature. I am sorry.  
By the way, have you spoken any harsh words to him  
of late?

*Ophelia.* No, my good lord; but as you commanded  
I hurriedly returned his letters and denied him  
Any access to my company.

*Polonius.* That is what has made him mad.  
I am sorry that with better attention and judgment  
I did not observe him. I feared he did but trifle,  
And meant to wreck your life; but curse my suspicions!  
By heaven, it is as characteristic of our age  
To overreach ourselves in our judgment  
As it is common for the younger sort  
To lack discretion. Come, let us go to the king:  
This must be made known; were it kept secret it might  
cause

More mischief by concealment than anger by disclosure.

Come. (*Exeunt*)

*Scene 2. A room in the castle.*

*Flourish.* Enter King, Queen, Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, and Attendants.

*King.* Welcome, dear Rosencrantz and Guildenstern!  
Besides the fact that we greatly longed to see you,  
The need we have of your services provoked  
Our hasty summons. You have heard something  
Of Hamlet's transformation; so I call it,  
Since neither the outward nor the inward man  
Resembles what it was. What it should be,  
More than his father's death, that has thus put him  
So far from understanding his own condition,

I cannot imagine. I entreat you both,  
That, having been reared with him from childhood,  
And so intimately associated with his youth and dis-  
position,

That you will please remain here in our court  
Some little time; thus by your company  
To divert him into pastimes, and to discover  
As much from opportunities as you can gather,  
Whether anything, to us unknown, afflicts him thus,  
And, brought to light, may be remedied by us.

*Queen.* Good gentlemen, he has often talked of you;  
And I am sure there are not two men living  
To whom he clings more closely. If it will please you  
To show us so much courtesy and good will  
In spending your time with us awhile  
For the aid and realization of our hope,  
Your visit shall receive such thanks  
As befits a king's remembrance.

*Rosencrantz.* Both your majesties  
Might better, by the sovereign power you have over us,  
Express your highly respected wishes more in the form  
of command

Than in that of entreaty.

*Guildestern.* We shall both obey,  
And here tender ourselves, in full inclination  
To lay our services freely at your feet,  
At your command.

*King.* Thanks, noble Rosencrantz and Guildestern.

*Queen.* Thanks, noble Guildestern and Rosencrantz:  
And I beseech you immediately to visit  
My too much changed son. Go, some of you,  
And take the gentlemen into Hamlet's presence.

*Guildestern.* May heaven make our presence and  
devices

Pleasant and beneficial to him.

*Queen.*

Ay, amen!

*(Exeunt Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, and some Attendants.)*

*Enter Polonius.*

*Polonius.* The ambassadors from Norway, my good lord,

Have joyfully returned.

*King.* You always have been the source of good news.

*Polonius.* Have I, my lord? Be assured, my good liege,

That I hold my duty sacred as my soul,

Both to my God and to my gracious king;

And I do believe, or else this brain of mine

Follows not the path of diplomacy as surely

As it has been accustomed to do, that I have found

The real cause of Hamlet's lunacy.

*King.* O, speak of that; I long to hear about it.

*Polonius.* First give audience to the ambassadors;

My news shall be dessert to that great feast.

*King.* You will do me the kindness to bring them in.

*(Exit Polonius.)*

He tells me, my dear Gertrude, he has found

The fountain-head of your son's ailment.

*Queen.* I suspect it is nothing other than the main cause,——

His father's death, and our precipitate marriage.

*King.* Well, we shall sift him.

*Re-enter Polonius, with Voltimand and Cornelius.*

Welcome, my good friends!

Say, Voltimand, what news from our brother Norway?

*Voltimand.* Most fair return of greetings and best wishes.

After our first conference he sent out orders to suppress

His nephew's levies of soldiers, which appeared to him  
To be a preparation against Poland;  
But further investigated he truly discovered  
It aimed against your highness: whereupon grieved  
That his sickness, age, and impotence  
Was so taken advantage of, sends out arrests  
On Fortinbras; which the latter, in brief, obeys;  
Receives a rebuke from Norway, and in conclusion  
Makes a vow before his uncle never more  
To make a trial of arms against your majesty.  
Thereupon old Norway, overcome with joy,  
Grants him an annual sum of three thousand crowns,  
And a commission to employ those soldiers,  
Precisely levied as before, against Poland;  
With an entreaty, herein detailed, (*Giving a paper*)  
That you would please grant quiet passage  
Through your dominions for this enterprise,  
On such terms as may be both safe and allowable  
Therein outlined.

*King.* This is pleasing to us;  
And when we have time for further deliberation we'll  
read,  
Make answer, and meditate upon this affair.  
Meantime we thank you for your well-undertaken  
labour.

Go to your rest; at night we'll feast together:  
Most welcome home!

(*Exeunt Voltimand and Cornelius*)

*Polonius.* This business is well ended.  
My liege, and madam, fully to discuss  
What majesty should be, what duty is,  
Why day is day, night night, and time is time,  
Were nothing but to waste night, day, and time.  
Therefore, since brevity is the soul of wisdom,  
And tediousness but the limbs and outward gestures,

I will be brief. Your noble son is mad:  
 Mad call I it; for, to define true madness,  
 What is it but to be nothing else but mad?  
 But let that go.

*Queen.*

More facts and less style.

*Polonius.* Madam, I swear I use no ornament at all.  
 That he is mad, 'tis true; 'tis true 'tis pity,  
 And pity 'tis 'tis true: a foolish figure!  
 But let it go, for I will use no rhetoric.  
 Mad let us then grant him; and it now remains  
 That we find out the cause of this effect,  
 Or rather, let us say, the cause of this defect,  
 For this effect defective comes by cause:  
 Thus it remains, and the remainder thus.  
 Now consider.

I have a daughter—have while she is mine—  
 Who, in her filial duty and obedience, mark you,  
 Has given me this letter; now get the facts, then sur-  
 mise what you will.

*(Reads the letter)*

"To the celestial and my soul's idol, the most beauti-  
 fied Ophelia,——"

That's an ill phrase, a vile phrase; 'beautified' is a vile  
 phrase. But you shall hear. Thus:

"In her excellent white bosom, these, etc."

*Queen.* Came this from Hamlet to her?

*Polonius.* Good madam, wait awhile. I will be  
 faithful. *(Reads)*

"Doubt thou the stars are fire,  
 Doubt that the sun doth move,  
 Doubt truth to be a liar,  
 But never doubt I love.

"O dear Ophelia, I am a bad poet. I have not the art  
 to express metrically my groans; but that I love  
 thee best, O most best, believe me. Adieu.

"Thine evermore, most dear lady,  
As long as this body is his,

HAMLET."

This in due obedience has my daughter shown me,  
And more than that, all his solicitings,  
As they occurred in point of time, and as regards  
means, and place,  
Have been given to my hearing.

*King.* But how has she  
Received his love?

*Polonius.* What do you think of me?

*King.* As of a man who is faithful and honourable.

*Polonius.* I always hope to prove so. But what would  
you have thought,

If when I had seen this hot love awing—  
For I perceived it, I must tell you that,  
Before my daughter told me—what would you,  
Or my dear majesty your queen here, have thought,  
If I had acted like a desk or writing-tablet,  
Or had hinted to my heart to be blind, mute and dumb,  
Or had looked upon this love without taking action;  
What would you have thought? No, I immediately  
went to work,

And my young mistress thus did I address:  
'Lord Hamlet is a prince, outside your sphere;  
This must not be.' And then I gave her instructions  
That she should lock herself from his approaches,  
Admit no messengers, receive no tokens.  
This done, she profited by my advice;  
And he, repulsed—to make a short story—  
Fell into a melancholy, from that into a fast,  
Then into sleeplessness, thence into weakness,  
From that into a lightness of head, and by this descent  
Into the madness wherein he now raves,  
And for which we all do mourn.

*King.* Do you think it is this?

*Queen.* It may very likely be.

*Polonius.* Has there ever been a time—I would like to know—

That I have positively said 'Tis so,  
And it proved to be otherwise?

*King.* Not that I know of.

*Polonius.* Take my head from my shoulders, if this be otherwise.

If circumstances direct me, I will find  
Where truth is hidden, though it were hidden indeed  
In the earth's centre.

*King.* How may we test this further?

*Polonius.* As you know, he walks sometimes four  
hours at a stretch

Here in the lobby.

*Queen.* So he does, indeed.

*Polonius.* At such time I'll put my daughter in his  
way:

Let you and me be hidden behind the wall-curtain;

Observe the encounter: if he does not love her

And deprived of reason on that account,

Let me be no longer assistant to the king,

But keep a farm and teamsters.

*King.* We will try it.

*Enter Hamlet, reading a book.*

*Queen.* Look at the poor wretch coming sadly, reading.

*Polonius.* Away, I beseech you, both go away;  
I'll address him at once.

*(Exeunt King, Queen, and Attendants)*

O, give me leave.

How does my good Lord Hamlet?

*Hamlet.* Well, God have mercy!

*Polonius.* Do you know me, my lord?

*Hamlet.* Excellently well; you are a fish-merchant.



*Polonius.* Not I, my lord.

*Hamlet.* Then I would wish you were so honest a man.

*Polonius.* Honest, my lord!

*Hamlet.* Yes; to be honest, as this world goes, is to be one man picked out of ten thousand.

*Polonius.* That's very true, my lord.

*Hamlet.* For if the sun engenders maggots in a dead dog, it being a carrion fit for sun-kissing,—Have you a daughter?

*Polonius.* I have, my lord.

*Hamlet.* Let her then not walk in the sun; conception is a blessing, but not as your daughter may conceive. Friend,

Look after it.

*Polonius.* (*Aside*) What do you say about that! Still harping on my daughter: yet me did not know me at first; he said that I was a fish-merchant; he is far gone, far gone: and to tell the truth in my own youth I suffered much extremity for love; very near to this. I'll speak to him again. What are you reading, my lord?

*Hamlet.* Words, words, words.

*Polonius.* What is the matter, my lord?

*Hamlet.* Between whom?

*Polonius.* I mean the reading-matter, my lord.

*Hamlet.* Slanders, sir; for the satirical rogue says here that old men have gray beards, that their faces are wrinkled, their eyes oozing thick amber and plum-tree gum, and that they have a conspicuous lack of presence of mind, together with very weak haunches; all of which, sir, though I most powerfully and potently believe it, I maintain is not propriety to have it thus set down; for you yourself, sir, would be only as old as I am, if, in years, like a crab's body, you could travel backward.

*Polonius (Aside)* Though this be madness, yet there is method in it.

Will you walk in, out of the air, my lord?

*Hamlet.* Into my grave?

*Polonius.* Indeed, that is out of the air. (*Aside*) How apt sometimes his replies are! an appropriateness that madness often hits upon, which reason and sanity could not be felicitously delivered of. I will leave him, and contrive circumstances for a sudden meeting between him and my daughter. My honourable lord, I most humbly take my leave of you.

*Hamlet.* You cannot, sir, take any thing from me that I will more willingly part with—(*Aside*) except my life, except my life, except my life.

*Polonius.* Fare you well, my lord.

*Hamlet.* These tedious old fools!

*Enter Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.*

*Polonius.* You are seeking the Lord Hamlet; there he is.

*Rosencrantz.* (*To Polonius*) God save you, sir!  
(*Exit Polonius*)

*Guildenstern.* My honoured lord!

*Rosencrantz.* My most dear lord!

*Hamlet.* My excellent good friends! How do you do, Guildenstern? Ah, Rosencrantz! Good lads, how fare you both?

*Rosencrantz.* As the average children of the earth.

*Guildenstern.* Happy, in that we are not overhappy. On Fortune's cap we are not the crowning button.

*Hamlet.* Nor the soles of her shoes?

*Rosencrantz.* Neither, my lord.

*Hamlet.* Then you live about her waist, or midway in her favours? What's the news?

*Rosencrantz.* None, my lord, but that the world's grown honest.

*Hamlet.* Then doomsday is near; but your news is not true.

Let me question you more in particular. What have, you, my good friends, deserved at the hands of Fortune, that she sends you to prison hither?

*Guildestern.* Prison, my lord!

*Hamlet.* Denmark's a prison.

*Rosencrantz.* Then the world is one.

*Hamlet.* A spacious one; in which there are many cells, wards, and dungeons, Denmark being one of the worst.

*Rosencrantz.* We do not think so, my lord.

*Hamlet.* Why, then 'tis none to you; for there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so: to me it is a prison.

*Rosencrantz.* Why, then your ambition makes it one; it is too narrow for your mind.

*Hamlet.* O God, I could be a worm bounded by a nut shell and count myself king of infinite space, were it not that I have bad dreams.

*Guildestern.* Which dreams, indeed, are ambition; for the seemingly substantial things which the ambitious pursue are merely shadows of dreams.

*Hamlet.* A dream itself is only a shadow.

*Rosencrantz.* Truly, and I regard ambition itself to be of so airy and light a quality that it is but a shadow's shadow.

*Hamlet.* Then beggars, who have no ambition, are substantial people; and our monarchs and far-grasping heroes, with their ambition, are but shadows of the beggars. Shall we go in to the court? for, by my faith, I cannot reason.

*Rosencrantz.* }  
*Guildestern.* } Let us be your servants.

*Hamlet.* Nothing of the kind: I will not mix you in with the rest of my servants; for, to talk like an honest man, I am most abominably waited upon.

But, on the well-trod road of friendship, what are you doing in Elsinore?

*Rosencrantz.* To visit you, my lord; no other purpose.

*Hamlet.* Beggar that I am, I am even poor in thanks; but I thank you: and surely, dear friends, my thanks are too dear at a half-penny. Were you not sent for? Is it purely your own inclination? Is this a voluntary visitation? Come, deal justly with me: come, come; nay, speak.

*Guildestern.* What should we say, my lord?

*Hamlet.* Why any thing to the point. You were sent for; and there is a kind of confession in your looks which your modesty has not enough cunning to disguise. I am aware that the good king and queen have sent for you.

*Rosencrantz.* For what purpose, my lord?

*Hamlet.* That, you must teach me. But let me conjure you, by the rights of our fellowship together, by our agreement in age and youth, by the obligations of our enduring love, and by what still more dear than a better speaker than I could charge you with, be plain and straightforward with me, as to whether you were sent for or not.

*Rosencrantz.* (*Aside to Guildestern*) What do you say?

*Hamlet.* (*Aside*) Ah, now I shall keep an eye on you. If you love me do not hold back.

*Guildestern.* My lord, we were sent for.

*Hamlet.* I shall tell you why, in order that my anticipation shall precede any disclosure by you, and your secrecy need not have dropped a single syllable. I have of late—but for what reason I know not—lost all my mirth, given up all practice of exercises; and indeed it goes so heavily with my disposition that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory; this most excel-

lent canopy, the air, look you, this lovely o'erhanging firmament, this majestic roof, fretted with golden fire, why it appears no other thing to me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours. What a piece of work is man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how expressive and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals! And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? man delights me not; no, nor woman, either, though by your smiling you seem to say so.'

*Rosencrantz.* My lord, there was no such stuff in my thoughts.

*Hamlet.* Why did you laugh then, when I said 'man delights me not?'

*Rosencrantz.* To think, my lord, if you delight not in man, what meagre entertainment the players shall receive from you; we passed around them on the way, and here they are coming to offer you service.

*Hamlet.* He that plays the king shall be welcome; his majesty shall receive tribute from me; the adventurous knight shall use his foil and shield; the lover shall not sigh for nothing; the eccentric man shall end his part in peace; the clown shall make those laugh who have lungs readily moved to laughter; and the lady shall speak her mind freely though she mutilate the blank verse. What players are they?

*Rosencrantz.* The same ones you used to take such delight in, the tragedians of the city.

*Hamlet.* How does it happen that they travel? their residence in the city, both in reputation and income, would be better, both ways.

*Rosencrantz.* I think their suspension of performance comes as a result of the recent innovation.

*Hamlet.* Do they not hold the same popular regard which they did when I was in the city? are they still well patronized?

*Rosencrantz.* No; indeed, they are not.

*Hamlet.* How does it come? are they growing rusty?

*Rosencrantz.* Not that, either, for their endeavours keep the accustomed pace; but there is, sir, a sturdy brood of children, young hawks, who scream out their lines at the top of their voices, and get most violently applauded for it: these are now all the rage, and so berate the ordinary theatres—so they call them—that their patrons are deserting them for fear of satirical attacks on the part of the children's playwrights.

*Hamlet.* What, are they children? who maintains them? how are they salaried? Will they follow the profession only till their voices change? will they not say afterward, when they grow into ordinary players—which is most likely to happen, unless they find better means of subsistence—that their playwrights have done them wrong, to make them ruin their own future prospects?

*Rosencrantz.* In faith, there has been ado on both sides; and the nation does not consider it a sin to urge them on to controversy; there was for awhile no money bid for the plot of a play unless the poet and the actor indulged in fisticuffs somewhere in the dialogue.

*Hamlet.* Is it possible?

*Gilzenstern.* O, there has been much tossing about of wits.

*Hamlet.* Do the boys sweep everything before them?

*Rosencrantz.* Yes, they do, my lord; even the Globe is affected.

*Hamlet.* It is not very strange, after all; for my uncle is king of Denmark, and those who used to make faces at him while my father was alive, now give

twenty, forty, fifty, a hundred ducats apiece for his miniature. God's blood! there is something more than human nature in these things, if philosophy could find it out.

*(Flourish of trumpets within)*

*Guildenstern.* There come the players.

*Hamlet.* Gentlemen, you are welcome to Elsinore.

Give me your hands, come; the proper accompaniment is merely ceremonious form: let me formally receive you in this style, lest my familiar courtesy in receiving the players, which, you know, must look cordial externally should appear more friendly than mine to you. You are welcome; but my uncle-father and aunt-mother are deceived.

*Guildenstern.* In what, my dear lord?

*Hamlet.* I am but mad when the wind blows one direction,—when it is otherwise I can distinguish hypocrisy from innocence.

*Re-enter Polonius.*

*Polonius.* May everything be well with you, gentlemen!

*Hamlet.* Hark you, Guildenstern; and you, too; at each ear a hearer: that great baby you see there is not yet out of his swaddling clouts.

*Rosencrantz.* Perhaps he's come to them the second time, for they say an old man comes to second childhood.

*Hamlet.* I will prophesy that he comes to tell me of the players; mark it. You say right, sir: on Monday morning; it was so, indeed.

*Polonius.* My lord, I have news to tell you.

*Hamlet.* My lord, I have news to tell you. When Roscius was an actor in Rome—

*Polonius.* The actors have come hither, my lord.

*Hamlet.* Buz, buz!

*Polonius.* Upon my honour—

*Hamlet.* Then came each actor on his ass—

*Polonius.* The best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, observing the unities or disregarding them; Seneca cannot be too heavy, nor Plautus too light. When it comes either to strict adherence to rules or to extemporizing, these are the only men.

*Hamlet.* O Jephthah, judge of Israel, what a treasure hadst thou!

*Polonius.* What treasure had he, my lord?

*Hamlet.* Why,  
‘One fair daughter, and no more,  
The which he loved passing well.’

*Polonius.* (*Aside*) Still on my daughter.

*Hamlet.* Am I not in the right, old Jephthah?

*Polonius.* If you call me Jephthah, my lord, I have a daughter whom I love passing well.

*Hamlet.* No, that is not what follows.

*Polonius.* What does follow, then, my lord?

*Hamlet.* Why,  
‘As by lot, God wot,’  
and then you know,

‘It came to pass, as most like it was,’—  
the first stanza of the pious ballad<sup>1</sup> will show you more; for look, here come my abridgers.

*Enter four or five Players.*

You are welcome, masters; welcome, all. I am glad to see you well. Welcome, good friends. O, my

<sup>1</sup>Hamlet here is quoting a popular Elizabethan religious ballad, registered 1567-68, and entitled *Jephtha, Judge of Israel*. The lines are therefore historical but anachronistic.



old friend! Your face is fringed since I saw you last. What, my young lady and mistress! By our Lady, your ladyship is nearer heaven than when I saw you last by the height of an Italian cork heel. Pray God that your voice, like a piece of uncurrent gold, may not have broken so greatly as to have lost its value. Masters, you are all welcome. We shall go after things like French falconers do,—turn loose at every thing we see; we'll have a speech forthwith. Come, give us a sample of your skill; come, a passionate speech.

*I Player.* What speech, my lord?

*Hamlet.* I once heard you deliver a speech, but it was never acted; or, if it was, not more than once; for the play, I remember, pleased not the million; it was too complex for general tastes: but it was—as it impressed me, and others, whose judgment in such matters outweighed mine—an excellent play with well proportioned and arranged scenes, and written with as much correctness as shrewdness. I remember hearing it said that there were no improprieties in the lines to make the substance of them zestful, nor any substance in the phrasing that might indict the author of affectation; but it was honourable in method, as wholesome as sweet, and with far more natural charm than artificial. One speech in it I chiefly loved: it was Æneas' tale to Dido, and that part of it particularly where the Trojan prince tells about Priam's murder. If you still retain it in memory, begin at this line; let me see, let me see,—

'The rugged Pyrrhus, like the Hyrcanian beast'—it is not thus; it begins with Pyrrhus:

'The rugged Pyrrhus, he whose sable arms,  
Black as his purpose, did the night resemble  
When he lay concealed in the fateful horse,  
Has now this dreadful black complexion smeared

With coat of arms more dismal; head to foot  
He is now dyed red, horribly adorned  
With the blood of fathers, mothers, daughters, and  
sons,

Baked into paste with parching dust;  
The streets lending tyrannous and damned light  
To their vile murders. Roasted in rage and fire  
And besmeared with clotted blood,  
With eyes like burning red coals, the hellish Pyrrhus  
Old grandsire Priam seeks!

So, you proceed.

*Polonius.* Before God, my lord, well spoken, with  
good accent and good judgment.

*I Player.* 'Presently he finds him  
Striking too shortly at Greeks; his ancient sword,  
Rebellious with his arm, lies where it falls,  
Disobedient to command: thus, unequally matched  
Pyrrhus drives down on Priam; in rage strikes wide;  
But with the whiff and twist of his cruel sword  
The unnerved patriarch falls. Then insensible Troy,  
Becoming conscious of this blow, with flaming roof  
Crashes to its foundation, and with the hideous roar  
Catches Pyrrhus' ear; for, lo! his sword,  
Descending on the snowy head  
Of the venerable Priam, seemed in the air transfixed;  
So, as a tapestried tyrant, Pyrrhus stood;  
Ignoring his own desires and endeavour,  
Did nothing.

But, as we often see, just before some storm,  
A silence in the heavens, the mass of clouds stand still,  
The bold winds speechless and the earth below  
As hushed as death, at once the terrific thunder  
Rends the skies; so, after Pyrrhus' pause,  
Revived vengeance sets him at work anew,  
And never did the Cyclops' hammer fall  
On Mars's armour, forged for eternal resistance,  
With less remorse than Pyrrhus' bloody sword

Now falls on Priam.

Away, thou harlot, Fortune! All you gods,  
In general conclave take away her power;  
Break all the spokes and felloes from her wheel,  
And bowl the round hub down the long hill of heaven  
As low as hell itself!

*Polonius.* This is too long.

*Hamlet.* It shall go to the barber's, with your beard.

I pray you, recite on; come to Hecuba.

*1 Player.* 'But who, O who had seen the muffled queen'—

*Hamlet.* 'The muffled queen?'

*Polonius.* That's good; 'muffled queen' is good.

*1 Player.* 'Run barefoot up and down, threatening the flames

With blinding tears; a clout upon that head  
Where lately the diadem had stood; and for a robe,  
About her lank and exhausted loins  
A blanket, in the alarm of fear caught up;  
Whosoever had seen this, with tongue in venom steeped

Would have proposed treason against the throne of Fortune:

But if the gods did see her then,  
When she saw Pyrrhus making malicious sport  
In chopping with his sword her husband's limbs,  
The sudden burst of clamour that she made,—  
Unless things mortal affect them not at all,—  
Would have dimmed with tears the burning eyes of heaven.

And roused compassion in the gods.

*Polonius.* Look,—he has lost his colour, and has tears in his eyes. I pray you, no more.

*Hamlet.* 'Tis well; I'll have you recite the rest of this soon. My good lord, will you see the players well lodged? Do you hear, let them be well looked after, for they are the epitome and brief chronicles

of the age; after your death it were better to have a bad epitaph than their ill will while you lived.

*Polonius.* My lord, I will use them according to their desert.

*Hamlet.* God's bodykins, man, much better! use every man after his desert, and who would escape whipping? Use them after the dictates of your own honour and dignity; the less they deserve, the more merit there is in your bounty. Take them in.

*Polonius.* Come, sirs.

*Hamlet.* Follow him, friends; we'll hear a play tomorrow.

*(Exit Polonius with all the Players except the First)*

Dost thou hear me, old friend? can you play *The Murder of Gonzago*?

*1 Player.* Yes, my lord.

*Hamlet.* We'll have it tomorrow night. You could, in an emergency, study a speech of some dozen or sixteen lines, which I would write and insert in it, could you not?

*1 Player.* Yes, my lord.

*Hamlet.* Very well. Follow that lord; and look that you do not mock him.

*(Exit 1 Player)*

My good friends, I'll leave you till night; you are welcome to Elsinore.

*Rosencrantz.* My good lord!

*Hamlet.* And so, good-bye.

*(Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern)*

Now I am alone.

O what a rogue and peasant slave I am!  
Is it not monstrous that this player here,

Only in a fiction, in an emotional make-believe,  
Could so force his soul to his own imagination  
That from its working his face completely paled,  
With tears in his eyes, distraction in his visage,  
A broken voice, and all his bodily actions  
Appropriate to his conception? and all for naught!  
For Hecuba!

What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba,  
That he should weep for her? What would he do  
Had he the prompting motive for passion  
That I have? He would drown the stage in tears  
And split the ear of the general public with awful  
speech,

Make mad the guilty and appall the innocent,  
Confuse the ignorant, and astound indeed  
The hearing and the seeing faculties. Yet I,  
A dull and irresolute rascal, mope,  
Like John-a-dreams, uninspired by my cause,  
And can say nothing; no, not even for a king,  
Upon whose possessions and most dear life  
Damnable ruin was wrought. Am I a coward?  
Who calls me villain? strikes me over the head?  
Pulls off my beard and blows it in my face?  
Tweaks me by the nose? calls me liar with galling  
insult,

Which I fear to resent? Who does this to me?  
Ha!

Zounds! I'd take it; for it cannot be otherwise  
But that like the pigeon's liver, I lack gall  
To make me feel the bitterness of oppression, or before  
this

I would have fattened all the kites of the air  
With this slave's remains. Bloody, bawdy villain!  
Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, unnatural villain!  
O vengeance!

Why, what an ass am I! surely this is a fine show,  
That I, the son of a dear father murdered,

Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,  
Must, like a prostitute, relieve my oppression with  
words,

And fall to cursing, like a very harlot,

A scullion!

Fie upon it! Foh! Wits, to work! I have heard  
That guilty creatures sitting at a play  
Have by the very cunning of the scene  
Been so struck to the soul that thereupon  
They have proclaimed their malefactions;  
For murder, though it have no tongue, will speak  
Through some miraculous organ. I'll have these  
players

Play something like the murder of my father  
Before my uncle: I'll observe his looks;  
I'll probe him to the quick: if he but flinch  
I know my course. The spirit I have seen  
May be the devil; and the devil has power  
To assume a pleasing shape; yes, and perhaps  
Takes advantage of my weakness and my melancholy,  
As he is very potent with such spirits,  
Deludes me that he may damn me. I'll have grounds  
More conclusive than this. The play's the thing  
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king.

### ACT III

#### *Scene 1. A room in the castle.*

*Enter King, Queen, Polonius, Ophelia, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern.*

*King.* And can you, by no roundabout course,  
Get from him the cause for this confusion,  
Grating so harshly his days of quiet  
With turbulent and dangerous lunacy?

*Rosencrantz.* He confesses that he feels himself distracted;  
But from what cause he will by no means speak.

*Guildenstern.* Nor do we find him disposed to be sounded,  
But with a crafty madness he holds aloof,  
When we tried to bring him to some confession  
Of his true condition.

*Queen.* Did he receive you well?  
*Rosencrantz.* Most like a gentleman.  
*Guildenstern.* But with much forced politeness.

*Rosencrantz.* Evasive when questioned, but most cordial to our own interests.  
*Queen.* Did you tempt him  
To any pastime?  
*Rosencrantz.* Madam, it so befell that certain players  
Were overtaken by us on the way; of these we told him,  
And there seemed to appear in him a kind of joy  
To hear of it. They are here at court,  
And, as I think, already have orders

This night to play before him.

*Polonius.* 'Tis most true;

And he besought me to entreat your majesties

To hear and see the play.

*King.* With all my heart; and it much gratifies me

To hear him so inclined.

Good gentlemen, whet him on,

And incite his purpose further to indulge in these  
entertainments.

*Rosencrantz.* We shall, my lord.

*(Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern)*

*King.* Sweet Gertrude, leave us, too;

For we have secretly summoned Hamlet hither,

That he may, as though it were by accident,

Here confront Ophelia.

Her father and myself, lawful spies,

Will so conceal ourselves that, seeing unseen,

We may frankly judge by their encounter

And gather from him, according to his behaviour,

Whether or not it is the affliction of love

That causes him so to suffer.

*Queen.* I shall obey you.

And for your part, Ophelia, I trust

That your charm and beauty may be the causes

Of Hamlet's wildness; so shall I hope your virtues

May bring him to his former ways again,

With honour to both.

*Ophelia.* Madam, I wish they may.

*(Exit Queen)*

*Polonius.* Ophelia, you walk here. May it please your  
grace,

We will now conceal ourselves. *(To Ophelia)* Read  
in this book;

That the show of such occupation may excuse



Your loneliness. We are often to blame here—  
It is proved too much—that with the outward face of  
devotion

And pious action we do sugar-coat  
The devil himself.

*King. (Aside)* O, 'tis only too true!  
How severe a lash that speech gives to my conscience!  
The harlot's cheek, beautified with plastering art,  
Is not more ugly compared with paint itself  
Than is my deed to my most hypocritical word.  
O heavy burden!

*Polonius.* I hear him coming; let us withdraw, my  
lord.

*(Exeunt King and Polonius)*

*Enter Hamlet*

*Hamlet.* To be, or not to be—that is the question;  
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer  
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,  
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,  
And by opposing, end them. To die,—to sleep,—  
No more; and by a sleep to say we end  
The heartache and the thousand natural shocks  
That flesh is heir to,—'tis a consummation  
Most devoutly to be wished. To die,—to sleep,—  
To sleep! perchance to dream! ay, there's the rub;  
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come  
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,  
Must give us pause: there's the consideration  
That makes calamity of too long a life;  
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,  
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's scorn,  
The pangs of unprized love, the law's delay,  
The insolence of office, and the spurns  
That patient merits from the unworthy takes,  
When he himself might his quittance make

With a mere dagger? who would these burdens bear,  
 To groan and sweat under a weary life,  
 But that the dread of something after death,  
 The undiscovered country from whose boundaries  
 No traveller returns, puzzles the will,  
 And makes us choose to bear those ills we have  
 Than flee to others that we know naught of?  
 Thus deliberation makes cowards of us all;  
~~And thus the natural colour of resoluteness~~  
 Is made sickly with the pallid hue of anxiety,  
 And enterprises of great pith and import  
 With this regard their currents turn aside,  
 And lose the name of action. Soft, now!  
 The fair Ophelia! Nymph, in thy prayers  
 Be all my sins remembered.

*Ophelia.* My good lord,

How does your honour these many days past?

*Hamlet.* I humbly thank you; well, well, well.

*Ophelia.* My lord, I have remembrances of yours,  
 Which I have long wished to re-deliver;  
 I pray you, now receive them.

*Hamlet.* No, not I;

I never gave you anything.

*Ophelia.* My honoured lord, you know right well you  
 did;

And accompanying them words of such sweet senti-  
 ment composed

As made the things more precious: the perfume gone,  
 Now take them back; for to the noble mind  
 Rich gifts become poor when givers prove unkind.  
 There, my lord.

*Hamlet.* Ha, ha! are you virtuous?

*Ophelia.* My lord!

*Hamlet.* Are you fair?

*Ophelia.* What does your lordship mean?

*Hamlet.* That if you are both virtuous and fair, your  
 virtue should most carefully guard your beauty.

*Ophelia.* Could beauty, my lord, have better association than with virtue?

*Hamlet.* Yes, indeed; for beauty can more easily transform virtue from what it is to evil, than virtue can retranslate beauty into its likeness: this was once a paradox, but now time gives it proof. I did love you once.

*Ophelia.* Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so.

*Hamlet.* You should not have believed me, for virtue cannot so purify our old nature but that we shall still be tinctured with it; I loved you not.<sup>1</sup>

*Ophelia.* I was the more deceived.

*Hamlet.* Go your way to a nunnery; why should you want to become the mother of sinners? I am myself fairly virtuous, but still I could accuse myself of such things that it would have been better had my mother not borne me. I am very proud, revengeful, ambitious, with more offenses at my command than I have thoughts to mould them in, imagination to give them shape, or time to act them in. What should such fellows as I be doing, crawling between heaven and earth? We are cowardly rogues, all; believe none of us. Go your way to a nunnery. Where's your father?

*Ophelia.* At home, my lord.<sup>2</sup>

*Hamlet.* Let the doors be shut upon him, that he may play the fool nowhere but in his own house.<sup>3</sup>  
Farewell.

*Ophelia.* O help him, you sweet heavens!

*Hamlet.* If you do marry, take this plague for a dowry: though you may be as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, you shall not escape slander. Get thee to a nunnery, go; farewell. Or, if you must

<sup>1</sup> Here Hamlet probably makes a gesture of anguish and supreme renunciation (behind Ophelia's back, of course).

<sup>2</sup> Bradley terms this "a heroic lie."

<sup>3</sup> Does Hamlet catch sight of Polonius behind the wall-curtain, or just plainly surmise that he is under secret surveillance?

marry, marry a fool; for intelligent men know well enough how you will point them out for ridicule. To a nunnery, go; and quickly, too. Farewell.

*Ophelia.* O you heavenly powers, restore him!

*Hamlet.* I have heard of your disguisings of the truth, too, well enough; God has given you one face, and you make yourselves another: you walk and you talk affectedly, and misname what God has created, and excuse your misconduct by pretending ignorance. Go away,—I'll have no more of it; it has made me mad. I say, we will have no more marriages: those who are married already shall live, all but one; the rest shall stay as they are. Away to a nunnery, go. (*Exit*)

*Ophelia.* O, what a noble mind is here overthrown! The courtier's taste, the soldier's courage, and scholar's eloquence;

The hope and the flower of this fair kingdom,  
The mirror of fashion and model of behaviour,  
Imitated by all observers, quite, quite down!  
And I, of ladies most dejected and wretched,  
Who believed the sweetness of his musical vows,  
Now see that noble and most superior reason,  
Like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh;  
That matchless form of full-blooming youth  
Blasted with insanity. O, woe is me,  
To see what I have seen, and to see what now I see!

*Re-enter King and Polonius.*

*King.* Love! his mental state does not tend in that direction;

Nor what he spoke, though lacking form a little,  
Like madness. There's something on his soul  
Over which his melancholy sits on brood,  
And I am fearful the hatching of the egg

Will be something dangerous ; which to prevent,  
I have with prompt determination  
Thus made up a plan : he shall go with speed to England,  
In order to demand our neglected tribute payment.  
Perhaps diverse seas and countries  
With varying objects of interest shall expel  
This somewhat fixed trouble in his mind,  
On which his brain still beating puts him thus  
From his usual path of conduct. What do you think  
about it?

*Polonius.* It is bound to do good ; but I yet believe  
The source and origin of his grief  
Sprang from neglected love. How now, Ophelia !  
You need not tell us what Lord Hamlet said ;  
We heard it all. My lord, do as you please,  
But, if you see fit, after the play  
Let his queen mother all alone entreat him  
To show his cause of grief : let her be plain with him ;  
And I'll be placed, so please you, where I can hear  
All their conference. If she discover not the cause,  
To England send him, or else confine him where  
Your wisdom shall think best.

*King.* . . . . . It shall be so ;  
Madness in high rank must not unwatched go.

*Scene 2. A hall in the castle.*

*Enter Hamlet and the Players.*

*Hamlet.* Speak that speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue ; but if you mouth it, as many of our players do, I had as soon the town-crier spoke my lines. Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus, but do everything with moderation ; for in the very torrent, tempest, and, as I may say, the whirlwind

of passionate expression, you must acquire and beget a restraint that shall give it smoothness. O, it offends me to the soul to hear a boisterous, be-wigged fellow tear an emotion to tatters, to very rags, in order to split the ears of those in the pit, who for the most part, are capable of understanding nothing but unintelligible pantomimes and noise. I would want such a fellow whipped for overdoing the part of Termagant; it outvies the rôle of Herod in bluster; pray you, avoid it.

*1 Player.* I guarantee your honour.

*Hamlet.* Do not be too tame, either, but let your judgment be your tutor; suit the action to the word, the word to the action; with this particular care, that you never overstep the moderation of nature; for anything so overdone is contrary to the very purpose of playing, the goal of which, from the beginning down till now, was and is, to hold, as it were, the mirror up to nature;<sup>4</sup> to reflect back to virtue her own face, to scorn her own image, and to the age its very form and character. Now this overdone, or feebly done, though it may make the untrained laugh, cannot but make those of discernment grieve; the opinion of one of the latter must, in your estimation, outweigh a whole theatre full of the former. O, there are players whom I have seen play, and have heard others praise, and that highly, not to speak profanely, that, having neither the accent nor the gait of Christian, pagan, or man, have so strutted about and bellowed that I have thought some of nature's inferior mechanics had attempted to make men and had not made them well, they imitated humanity so abominably.

*1 Player.* I hope we have reformed that tolerably well with us, sir.

<sup>4</sup>This is Shakespeare's definition of art.

*Hamlet.* O, reform it completely. And keep those who play clowns' parts from extemporizing jests; for there are some of them who will laugh themselves in order to get a certain number of dull-witted spectators to laugh, also, though right at the time some important feature of the drama was under serious consideration: that is outrageous, and shows a most pitiful and paltry ambition in the fool who attempts it. Go, get yourselves ready.  
(*Exeunt Players*)

*Enter Polonius, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern.*

How now, my lord! will the king listen to this piece?

*Polonius.* And the queen, too, and that at once.

*Hamlet.* Bid the players to make haste. (*Exit Polonius*)

Will you two also help to hasten them?

*Rosencrantz.* } We will, my lord.

*Guildenstern.* }

(*Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*)

*Hamlet.* What, ho, Horatio!

*Enter Horatio.*

*Horatio.* Here, sweet lord, at your service.

*Hamlet.* Horatio, you are as just a man  
As ever I held conversation with.

*Horatio.* O, my dear lord,—

*Hamlet.* No, do not think I flatter,  
For what material advancement may I hope from you  
Whose only income is his good spirits  
To feed and clothe himself? Why should the poor  
be flattered?

No, let the sugared tongue lick absurd pomp,  
And the ready knee be bent

Where profit may come from fawning. Do you hear?  
 Ever since my dear soul was mistress of her choosing  
 And could among men discriminate, her selection  
 Has sealed you for herself; for you have been  
 Like one, who, suffering all things, has suffered nothing,—

A man who has taken Fortune's buffets and her rewards  
 With equal thanks; and blessed are those  
 Whose emotions and reason are so well balanced  
 That they are not a pipe for Fortune's fingers  
 To play what stops she pleases. Give me that man  
 Who is not the slave of impulse, and I will wear him  
 In my heart's core, yes, in my heart of hearts,  
 Even as I do you. But too much of this.  
 There's a play tonight before the king;  
 One scene of it comes close to the circumstances  
 Which I have told you surrounded my father's death.  
 I pray you, when you see that act performed,  
 With all your powers of observation  
 Watch my uncle. If his unseen guilt  
 Does not reveal itself at one speech,  
 It is an unsaved Ghost that we have seen,  
 And my imagination is as foul  
 As Vulcan's smithy. Give him close attention;  
 For I my eyes will rivet on his face,  
 And afterward we shall compare our judgments  
 In deciding about his behaviour.

*Horatio.* Well, my lord;  
 If he steal anything while this play is playing  
 And escape detection, I will pay the theft.

*Danish march. Blare of trumpets. Enter King, Queen, Polonius, Ophelia, Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, and other Lords attending, with Guards carrying torches.*

*Hamlet.* They are coming to the play; I must appear idle.



Get you a place.

*King.* How fares our relative Hamlet?

*Hamlet.* Excellently well, in faith; on the chameleon's favourite dish. I eat the air, crammed with promises; you cannot feed capons so.

*King.* I cannot make anything out of this answer, Hamlet; these words are not mine.

*Hamlet.* No, nor mine, now. (*To Polonius*) My lord, you played once in the university, you say?

*Polonius.* That I did, my lord, and was accounted a good actor.

*Hamlet.* And what did you enact?

*Polonius.* I enacted Julius Cæsar; I was killed in the Capitol; Brutus killed me.

*Hamlet.* It was the brute part of him to kill so capital a calf there.<sup>5</sup> Are the players ready?

*Rosencrantz.* Yes, my lord; they await your pleasure.

*Queen.* Come hither, my dear Hamlet; sit by me.

*Hamlet.* No, good mother, here's metal more attractive. (*Lying down at Ophelia's feet.*)

*Polonius.* (*To the King*) O, ho! do you mark that?

*Ophelia.* You are merry, my lord.

*Hamlet.* Who, I?

*Ophelia.* Yes, my lord.

*Hamlet.* O, God, only your entertainer. What else should a man do but be merry? for look how cheerfully my mother looks, and my father only dead two hours.

*Ophelia.* Nay, 'tis twice two months, my lord.

*Hamlet.* That long? Nay, then, let devil wear black, for I'll resume rich colours. O heavens! to die two months ago, and not yet forgotten? Then there's hope that a great man's memory may out-

<sup>5</sup> Hamlet could choose no surer method of convincing Polonius and the Court of his "insanity" than by ill-bred language, as he did previously in calling Polonius a fish-merchant. Hamlet is a gentleman by birth and breeding, and remarks of this character

live his life half a year; but, by Our Lady, he must order churches built, or else not be remembered, along with the late hobby-horse,<sup>6</sup> whose epitaph is, 'For, O, for, O, the hobby-horse is forgot.'

*Oboes play. The dumb-show enters.*

*Enter a King and a Queen with affectionate behaviour, the Queen embracing him. She kneels and makes eloquent protests of affection to him. He lifts her to her feet, and puts his head against hers. He then lies down on a bank of flowers. She, observing him sleep, leaves him. At once there comes a man, takes off the King's crown and kisses it, pours poison in the sleeper's ears, and makes an exit. The Queen returns, finds the King dead, and makes passionate gestures. The poisoner, with two or three others, come in again, and professes lamentation with her. The dead body is carried away. The poisoner woos the Queen with gifts; she seems unwilling awhile, but finally accepts his love. (Exeunt)*

*Ophelia.* What does this mean, my lord?

*Hamlet.* By the Virgin, this is miching mallecho; it means skulking mischief.

*Ophelia.* Very likely this show forecasts the plot of the play.

*Enter Prologue.*

*Hamlet.* We shall know from this fellow. The players cannot keep counsel; they'll tell all by and by.

*Ophelia.* Will he tell us what the dumb-show meant?

*Hamlet.* Yes, or any show you'll show him; be not

<sup>6</sup>A grotesque figure of the morris-dance featured in the May-day celebrations of Shakespeare's day, which the Puritans finally succeeded in abolishing.



ashamed to show, he'll not be ashamed to tell you its meaning.

*Ophelia.* You are bad, you are bad! I am going to watch the play.

*Prologue.* 'For us, and for our tragedy,  
Here stooping to your clemency,  
We beg your hearing patiently.'

*Hamlet.* Is the prologue, or the inscription in a ring?

*Ophelia.* It is brief, my lord.

*Hamlet.* As woman's love.

*Enter Two Players, King and Queen.*

*Player King.* 'Full thirty times has Phoebus' chariot gone round

Neptune's salt ocean and Tellus' orb'd ground,  
And thirty dozen moons with borrowed sheen  
About the world have twelve times thirty been,  
Since love our hearts and Hymen did our hands  
Mutually unite in most sacred bands.'

*Player Queen.* 'So many journeys may the sun and moon

Make us count o'er again ere love be done!

But, woe is me! you are so ill of late,

So far from cheerfulness and your former state,  
That I have anxiety about you. Yet, though I am thus,  
Discomfort you, my lord, it nothing must;

For women's fear and love keep such proportion,  
That either both are absent, or both extreme.

Now, what my love is, proof has made you know;  
And as my love is great, my fear is so:

Where love is great, the smallest doubts are fear;  
Where little fears grow great, great love must be there.'

*Player King.* 'Faith, I must leave thee, love, and shortly, too;

My active powers their functions cease to do:  
And thou shalt live in this fair world behind,

Honoured, beloved; and doubtless one as kind  
As I for husband shalt thou'—

*Player Queen.* 'O, confound the rest!  
Such love would have to be treason in my breast;  
With second husband let me be accurst!  
None wed the second but who killed the first.'

*Hamlet. (Aside)* Wormwood, wormwood.

*Player Queen.* 'The motives that to second marriage  
move

Are base considerations of profit, not of love.  
A second time I'll kill my husband dead  
When second husband kisses me in bed.'

*Player King.* 'I will believe you think now what you  
speak,

But what we first determine, we often break.  
We keep our purpose while we remember it,  
But 'tis of sudden birth, and not permanent;  
Now, like unripe fruit, it clings fast to the tree,  
But falls, unshaken, when it becomes mellow.  
It is most inevitable that we do forget  
To keep our resolves, and pay ourselves this debt;  
What we to ourselves in passion do propose,  
The emotion fading, makes us our purpose lose.  
The violence of either grief or joys  
Their own enactments with themselves destroys:  
Where joys most revel, grief does most lament;  
Grief turns to joy, joy grieves, upon slightest accident.  
This world is not for ever, nor is it strange  
That even our loves do with our fortunes change;  
For it is a question left us yet to prove  
Whether love leads fortune, or fortune love.  
The great man o'erthrown, you note his favourite  
flees;

The poor man, advanced, makes friends of enemies:  
And heretofore does love on fortune depend;  
For whoever needs nought shall never lack a friend,  
And whoever in want a false friend does try,

Forthwith may turn him into an enemy.  
But, orderly to end where I began,  
Our desires and fates do so contrary run  
That our plans are ever overthrown;  
Our thoughts are ours, their outcomes not our own.  
So do you think you will no second husband wed;  
But such thoughts will die when your first lord is  
dead.'

*Player Queen.* 'May earth not give me food, nor  
heaven light!

Lock from me sport by day and repose at night!  
To deep despair turn my hope and trust!  
May a hermit's fare in prison be my range of joy!  
Each adversary that ever blanched the face of happiness

Meet what I wish well, and it destroy!  
Both here and hereafter, pursue me, lasting strife!  
If, being once a widow, I become again a wife.'

*Hamlet.* If she should break it now!

*Player King.* 'You have deeply sworn. Sweet one,  
leave me here awhile.

My spirits grow dull, and I want to beguile  
The tedious day with sleep.'

*Player Queen.* 'May sleep soothe thy brain;  
And never may mischance come between us twain.'

*Hamlet.* Madam, how do you like this play?

*Queen.* ~~I think the lady protests too much, methinks.~~

*Hamlet.* O, but she'll keep her word.

*King.* Do you know the story of the plot? There is  
nothing to give offence in it?

*Hamlet.* No, no, they do but jest,—poison in jest;  
no offence in the world.

*King.* What is the name of the play?

*Hamlet.* *The Mouse-Trap.* How is it a trap? Only  
figuratively. This play is the representation of a  
murder committed in Vienna. Gonzago is the  
duke's name; his wife's, Baptista. You shall see

presently; it is a knavish piece of work, but what of that? Your majesty and we who have unstained souls are not touched by it. Let the chafed horse wince: our shoulders are not sore.

*Enter Lucianus.*

This is one Lucianus, nephew to the king.

*Ophelia.* You are as good as a chorus in interpreting, my lord.

*Hamlet.* I could interpret between your actions and your professed love, could I see who was manipulating the springs.

*Ophelia.* You are keen, my lord, you are keen.

*Hamlet.* Well, begin, murderer; pox! leave off thy damnable faces, and begin! Come: 'The croaking raven doth bellow for revenge!'

*Lucianus.* 'Thoughts black, hands apt, drugs fit, and time agreeing;

Time a confederate and the only beholder seeing.

Thou mixture rank, of midnight weeds collected,

With Hecate's triple curse thrice infected,

Thy natural magic and fatal property.

On wholesome life usurp immediately.'

*(Pours the poison into the sleeper's ears)*

*Hamlet.* He poisons him in the garden for his estate. His name is Gonzago; the story is in circulation, and written in choice Italian. You shall see directly how the murderer wins the love of Gonzago's wife.

*Ophelia.* The king rises!

*Hamlet.* What, frightened with false fire!

*Queen.* How fares my lord?

*Polonius.* Put an end to the play.

*King.* Give me some light! Away!

*All.* Lights, lights, lights!

*(Exeunt all but Hamlet and Horatio)*

*Hamlet.* 'Why let the stricken deer go weep,  
The ungalled hart still play;  
For some must watch while some must sleep:  
So runs the world away.'

Would not this recitation, sir, with a whole forest of feathers—if the rest of my fortunes change wholly to traitors for me—with two Provincial rosettes on my embroidered shoes, get me a place as shareholder in any theatrical company?

*Horatio.* Only half a share.

*Hamlet.* A whole one, I say.

'For thou dost know, O Damon, dear,  
This realm dismantled was  
Of Jove himself; and there now reigns here  
A very, very—peacock.'<sup>7</sup>

*Horatio.* You might have made it rime.

*Hamlet.* O, good Horatio, I'll take the Ghost's word for a thousand pound wager. Didst perceive?

*Horatio.* Very well, my lord.

*Hamlet.* Right at the talk of poisoning?

*Horatio.* I did very well note him.

*Hamlet.* Ah, ha! Come, some music! Come, the flageolets!

'For if the king like not the comedy,  
Why, then, likely, he likes it not, par Dieu.'

Come, some music!

*Re-enter Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.*

*Guildenstern.* My good lord, vouchsafe me a word with you.

<sup>7</sup> It will be noted that in this ballad verse as in the preceding, Hamlet perpetually is contrasting the late Hamlet with Claudius. It is always "Hyperion to a satyr," "the stricken deer and the ungalled hart," "Jove to an ass" (the original rime for 'peacock.') Later, Claudius is the "mildew'd ear," etc.

*Hamlet.* Sir, a whole volume.

*Guildestern.* The king, sir,——

*Hamlet.* Yes, sir, what of him?

*Guildestern.* Is in retirement, marvellously out of temper.

*Hamlet.* Caused by drink, sir?

*Guildestern.* No, my lord, rather by anger.

*Hamlet.* Your wisdom would show itself of richer quality to tell this to his doctor; for, for me to put him to the cure would perhaps plunge him into far more anger.

*Guildestern.* My good lord, pray put your discourse into more definite form, and start not on a tangent from the affair in hand.

*Hamlet.* I am tame, sir; proceed.

*Guildestern.* The queen, your mother, in great affliction of spirit, has sent for you by me.

*Hamlet.* You are welcome.

*Guildestern.* Nay, my good lord, this courtesy is not of a true brand. If it shall please you to make a reasonable answer, I shall perform your mother's commandment; if not, your permission to go, and my return shall be the end of the business.

*Hamlet.* Sir, I cannot.

*Guildestern.* What, my lord?

*Hamlet.* Make you a reasonable answer; my mind's diseased: but, sir, such answer as I can make, shall be at your command; or, rather, as you say, my mother's: therefore, no more of this, but to the matter in hand at once. My mother, you say,——

*Rosencrantz.* Then she said this: Your behaviour has struck her with perplexity and astonishment.

*Hamlet.* O wonderful son, who can so astonish a mother! But is there no sequel at the heels of this mother's amazement? Impart.



*Rosencrantz.* She desires to speak to you in her private apartment before you go to bed.

*Hamlet.* We are bound to obey, were she ten times our mother. Have you any further business with me?

*Rosencrantz.* My lord, you once did love me.

*Hamlet.* So do I still, by these hands for picking and stealing.

*Rosencrantz.* My good lord, what is the cause of your peculiar behaviour? you surely are barring the door on your own freedom, if you fail to share your griefs with your friend.

*Hamlet.* Sir, I lack advancement to the throne.

*Rosencrantz.* How can that be, when you have the word of the king himself for your succession in Denmark.

*Hamlet.* Yes, sir, but you know, 'While the grass grows, the steed starves': the proverb is somewhat musty.

*Re-enter Players with flageolets.*

O the flageolets! Let me see one.—To tell you privately: why do you always try to get the advantage of me, as though trying to drive me into a trap?

*Guildestern.* O, my lord, if my duty to the queen make me seem too bold in addressing you, it is only my love that is unmannerly.

*Hamlet.* I do not well understand you. Will you play upon this pipe?

*Guildestern.* My lord, I cannot.

*Hamlet.* I pray you.

*Guildestern.* Believe me, I am not able.

*Hamlet.* I do beseech you.

*Guildestern.* I know no touch of it, my lord.

*Hamlet.* It is as easy as lying. Control these vents with fingers and thumb, give it breath from your mouth, and it will give forth most eloquent music. See, here are the stops.

*Guildestern.* But these I cannot command to any utterance of harmony; I have not the skill.

*Hamlet.* Why, then look you, what an unworthy thing you make of me! You would play upon me; you would seem to know my mystery; you would pluck out the heart of my mystery; you would sound me from the lowest note to the top of the compass: and there is much music, an excellent voice, in this little organ; yet you are unable to make it speak. God's blood! do you think I am easier than a pipe to play upon? Call me whatever instrument you will, though you can pick at me, you cannot produce harmony.

*Re-enter Polonius.*

God bless you, sir!

*Polonius.* My lord, the queen wishes to speak with you, and that immediately.

*Hamlet.* Do you see yonder cloud that's almost the shape of a camel?

*Polonius.* By the mass, 'tis like a camel, indeed.

*Hamlet.* I think it is like a weasel.

*Polonius.* It is backed like a weasel.

*Hamlet.* Or like a whale?

*Polonius.* Very like a whale.

*Hamlet.* Then I will come to my mother by and by.

(*Aside*) They fool me to my utmost extremity.

—I will come by and by.

*Polonius.* I will say so. (*Exit Polonius*)

*Hamlet.* 'By and by' is easily said. Leave me, friends.

*(Exeunt all but Hamlet)*

It is now the very witching hour of night,  
When the churchyards yawn, and hell itself breathes  
out

Contagion on this world. Now could I drink hot blood,  
And do such bitter deeds that the day

Would quake to behold them. Soft! now to my mother.

O heart, lose not thy natural feeling; let not ever

The soul of Nero enter this firm bosom; *no desire to be cruel*

Let me be cruel, but not unnatural.

I will speak daggers to her, but use none;

My tongue and soul herein be hypocrites:

Howsoever by my words be she crushed,

To confirm them by action, never, my soul, consent!

*(Exit)*

*Scene 3. A room in the castle.*

*Enter King, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern.*

*King.* I do not like his actions, nor is it safe with us  
To give his madness free range. Therefore, prepare  
yourselves.

I will at once dispatch you with a commission,  
And he shall go to England along with you.

The conditions of my authority cannot endure

Risks so imminent as do hourly grow

Out of his lunacy.

*Guildenstern.* We will provide ourselves;

It is a most sacred and justifiable fear

To preserve the safety of those many bodies

That are dependent on your majesty.

*Rosencrantz.* The individual and private life is duty  
bound

With all the strength and armour of the mind

To protect itself from injury, but much more so  
 That person upon whose welfare depends  
 The lives of many. The decease of a king  
 Is not to itself alone, but like a maelstrom it doth draw  
 Whatever is near it with it. It is a massive wheel,  
 Fixed on the summit of the highest mountain,  
 To whose huge spokes ten thousand lesser things  
 Are firmly adjoined and united; which, when it falls,  
 Each small attachment, petty consequence,  
 Attends the deafening ruin. Never alone  
 Does a king sigh, but his whole kingdom with him.  
*King.* Provide yourselves, I pray you, for this hasty  
 voyage;

For we shall now put fetters on this fear,  
 Which now goes about too free-footed.

*Guildestern.* }  
*Rosencrantz.* }

We will make haste.

*(Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildestern)*

*Enter Polonius.*

*Polonius.* My lord, he's going to his mother's apartment.

Behind the wall-curtain I shall secrete myself,  
 To hear the proceeding; I'll guarantee she'll roundly  
 reprove him:

And, as you said, and wisely was it said,  
 'Tis fitting that more audience than his mother,  
 Since nature makes them partial, should overhear  
 This speech from a post of vantage. Farewell, my  
 liege;

I'll call upon you before you go to bed,  
 And tell you what I learn.

*King.* Thanks, dear lord. *(Exit Polonius)*

O my offence is rank; it smells to heaven;  
 It has the first and oldest curse upon it,  
 A brother's murder! I cannot pray;

Though inclination is almost as strong as will,  
My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent,  
And, like a man to a twofold duty bound,  
I hesitate where I shall first begin,  
And neglect both. What if this cursed hand  
Were thicker than itself with brother's blood,  
Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens  
To wash it white as snow?<sup>8</sup> What is the service of  
mercy

But to confront sin, and forgive it?  
And what's in prayer but this twofold force,  
To be prevented from the act of falling,  
Or pardoned, having fallen?<sup>9</sup> Then I'll look up;  
My fault is past. But, O, what form of prayer  
Can serve my purpose? 'Forgive me my foul murder?'  
That cannot be; since I still possess  
Those benefits for which I committed the murder;  
My crown, my ambitions realized, and my queen.  
Can one be pardoned and yet retain the benefits of  
the offence?

In the corruptible courses of this world  
A rich offender's hand may shove justice by;  
And often it is seen that the guilty gains  
Buy out the law; but 'tis not so above;  
There is no shuffling; there the deed lies  
Revealed in its true nature, and we ourselves are  
compelled,

Face to face with our faults,  
To give in evidence. What then? what remains?  
Try what repentance can do. What can it not do?  
Yet what can it do when one cannot repent?  
O wretched state! O bosom black as death!  
O ensnared soul, that, struggling to be free,  
Art only more entangled. Help, angels! Make the  
effort!

<sup>8</sup> See Psalm 51: 7; Isaiah 1: 18.

<sup>9</sup> See Matt. 6: 13; Luke 11: 4.

Bow, stubborn knees, and, heart, with strings of steel,  
Become soft as the sinews of the new-born babe!  
All may be well. (*Retires and kneels*)

*Enter Hamlet.*

*Hamlet.* Now might I do it pat, now he is praying;  
And now I'll do it. And so he goes to heaven;  
And so I am revenged. That demands scrutiny.  
A villain kills my father; and for that deed,  
I, his only son, do this same villain send  
To heaven.

O, this is hire and salary, not revenge.  
He took my father unshriven, unfasting,  
With all his sins unexpiated, in life's full spring;  
And how his record stands who knows, save heaven?  
But from our human standpoint and course of thought,  
His reckoning is heavy; and am I then revenged  
By taking him, his soul cleansed by confession,  
When he is fit and prepared for his passage?  
No!

Up, sword; await more terrible occasion;  
When he is in a drunken stupor, or in a rage,  
Or in the incestuous pleasure of his bed;  
At gambling, swearing, or engaged in act  
That has no taste of salvation to it,—  
Then trip him, that his heels may kick at heaven,  
And that his soul may be as damned and black  
As hell, whereto it goes. My mother is waiting.  
This purging by prayer only prolongs thy sickness.

(*Exit*)

*King. (Rising)* My words fly up, my thoughts remain below;

Words without thoughts never to heaven go.

(*Exit*)

*Scene 4. The Queen's apartment.**Enter Queen and Polonius.*

*Polonius.* He will come at once. See that you severely reprove him;

Let him know his pranks have been too unrestrained to be borne with,

And that your grace has screened and stood between Much royal anger and him. I'll stop at this point.

Pray you, be severe with him.

*Hamlet. (Within)* Mother, mother, mother!

*Queen.* I warrant you I will;

Do not fear that. Withdraw, I hear him coming.

*(Polonius hides behind wall-curtain)*

*Enter Hamlet.*

*Hamlet.* How now, mother, what's the matter?

*Queen.* Hamlet, you have your father much offended.

*Hamlet.* Mother, you have my father much offended.

*Queen.* Come, come, you answer with a frivolous tongue.

*Hamlet.* Go, go, you talk with a wicked tongue.

*Queen.* Why, how now, Hamlet?

*Hamlet.* What's the matter now?

*Queen.* Have you forgotten me?

*Hamlet.* No, by the cross, not so:

You are the queen, your husband's brother's wife;

And—would it were not so—you are my mother.

*Queen.* Nay, then, I'll set those to you that can speak.

*Hamlet.* Come, come, and sit down; you shall not budge:

You shall not go till I set up before you a mirror

In which you may see the inmost parts of you.

*Queen.* What will you do? you will not murder me?

Help, help, ho!

*Polonius.* (*Behind*) What, ho! help, help, help!

*Hamlet.* (*Drawing his rapier*) How now! a rat?  
Dead, I'll wager a ducat, dead!

*(Makes a pass through the wall-curtain)*

*Polonius.* (*Behind*) O, I am slain! (*Falls and dies*)

*Queen.* O me! what have you done?

*Hamlet.* I do not know;

Is it the king?

*Queen.* O, what a rash and bloody deed this is!

*Hamlet.* A bloody deed! almost as bad, good mother,  
As to kill a king, and marry with his brother.

*Queen.* As kill a king!

*Hamlet.* Yes, lady, that was my word.

*(Lifts up the wall-curtain and discovers Polonius)*

Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell!

I mistook thee for thy superior; accept thy fate;

Thou hast found to be meddlesome is perilous.

Leave off the wringing of your hands! Peace! sit you  
down,

And let me wring your heart: for I shall do so

If it be made of penetrable stuff;

If damned custom have not made it so like brass

That it is impenetrable and incapable of feeling.

*Queen.* What have I done, that thou dar'st wag thy  
tongue

In noise so rudely against me?

*Hamlet.* Such an act

That it blurs the grace and blush of modesty,

Calls virtue a hypocrite, takes the rose

From the fair forehead of an innocent love,

And puts there the harlot's brand, makes marriage-  
vows



As false as dicers' oaths; O, such a deed  
As from the marriage-contract tears out  
Its inner spirit, and sweet religion makes  
A mere conglomeration of words! heaven's face doth  
burn,

Yea, this most solid, compact earth,  
With visage pallid as near to doomsday,  
Is sick at its very thought.

*Queen.* Indeed, what act,

That roars so loud and thunders in the prologue?

*Hamlet.* Look here, upon this picture, then on this,

The portrayed representation of two brothers.

See what natural grace was on this brow;

Hyperion's curls; the brow of Jove himself,

An eye like Mars, to threaten and command;

An upright attitude like the herald Mercury

Newly alighted on a heaven-kissing hill;

A combination and a form indeed,

Whereon each god did seem to set his seal

To give the world assurance of a man.

This was your husband. Look you now what follows:

Here is your husband; like a mildewed ear of grain,

Blasting his wholesome brother. Have you eyes?

Could you leave feeding on this fair mountain,

And fatten on this moor? Ha! have you eyes?

You cannot call it love, for at your age

The hey-day in the blood is tame, subdued,

And leans more on the judgment; and what judgment

Would wish to step from this to this? Feeling, surely,  
you possess,

Or else you could not have the power of motion; but  
surely that feeling

Is paralyzed; for madness would not so err,

And sense to insanity was never so enslaved,

But that it retained some power of discrimination,

In such a striking difference. What devil was it

That thus has cheated you in playing blind-man's-buff?

Eyes without feeling, feeling without sight,  
Ears minus hands or eyes, smelling sans all,  
Or but a diseased fraction of one true sense  
Could not possibly be so stupid.

O shame! where is thy blush? Rebellious hell,  
If thou canst mutiny in a matron's bones,  
To flaming youth let virtue become as wax,  
And melt in her own fire; proclaim no shame  
When compelling ardour stimulates impulse,  
Since frosty age itself as actively doth burn,  
And reason gives way to appetite.

*Queen.* O Hamlet, speak no more!  
You have turned my eyes into my very soul,  
And there I behold such black and ingrained spots  
That will never lose their stain.

*Hamlet.* Nay, but to live  
Stewed into filth,——

*Queen.* O speak to me no more!  
These words, like daggers, stick into my ears.  
No more, sweet Hamlet!

*Hamlet.* A murderer and a villain;  
A slave who is not a twentieth part the tithe  
Of your preceding husband; a buffoon of a king;  
A purse-snatcher of the empire and the rule,  
Who from a shelf the precious diadem stole,  
And put it in his pocket!

*Queen.* No more!

*Hamlet.* A king fit for the clown's motley,——

*Enter Ghost.*

Save me, and hover over me with your wings,  
You heavenly guardians! What would your gracious  
person?

*Queen.* Alas, he's mad!

*Hamlet.* Do you not come your tardy son to chide,

Who, letting both time and impulse lapse, allows to pass  
The important acting of your dread command?

O, tell me!

*Ghost.* Do not forget. This visitation  
Is but to sharpen thy almost blunted purpose.  
But, look, bewilderment on thy mother sits;  
O, step between her and her struggling soul!  
Imagination in weakest bodies strongest works.

Speak to her, Hamlet.

*Hamlet.* How is it with you, lady?

*Queen.* Alas, how is it with you,  
That you bend your vision on vacancy,  
And with immaterial air hold discourse?  
Forth at your eyes your spirit wildly gleams;  
And, like sleeping soldiers at a night alarm,  
Your recumbent hair, like life in excrescences,  
Starts up and stands on end. O noble son,  
Upon the heat and flame of thy indisposition  
Sprinkle cool patience. On what are you looking?

*Hamlet.* On him, on him! Look, how pale he glares!  
His appearance and cause together, preaching to stones,  
Would make them capable of feeling.<sup>10</sup> Do not look  
at me thus;

Lest with this piteous expression you change  
My stern intentions. Then I shall shed drops  
Of the wrong colour: tears, instead of blood.

*Queen.* To whom do you speak these words?

*Hamlet.* Do you see nothing there?

*Queen.* Nothing at all; yet I see all that is there.

*Hamlet.* Did you nothing hear?

*Queen.* No, nothing but ourselves.

*Hamlet.* Why, look there! see how it steals away!

My father, clothed as when alive!

Look where he is going, even now, out at the portal!

<sup>10</sup> Compare Matt. 3: 9; Luke 3: 8 and 19: 40; also *Macbeth*, II-i-57, 58.

*(Exit Ghost)*

*Queen.* This is only the creation of your brain;  
These bodiless phantoms insanity  
Is very cunning in embodying.

*Hamlet.* Insanity!  
My pulse, like yours, temperately keeps time,  
And makes as healthful a rhythm. It is not madness  
That I have uttered; bring me to the test,  
And I will repeat the substance word for word, which  
madness

Would leap aside from. Mother, for the love of grace,  
Lay not that soothing ointment on your soul,  
That not your sin but that my madness speaks;  
It will but skin and film the ulcerous place,  
While foul corruption, mining underneath,  
( Infects unseen. Confess yourself to heaven;  
Repent what's past, avoid what may come later;  
Do not spread dung upon the weeds,  
To make them ranker. Forgive my compelled candour;  
For in the grossness of these bloated times  
Virtue itself of vice must pardon beg,—  
Yes, bow and ask for leave to do it good.

*Queen.* O Hamlet, you have broken my heart in twain.

*Hamlet.* O, throw away the worse half of it,  
And with the other half live purer.  
Good night: but go not to my uncle's bed;  
Assume some virtue, if you really possess it not.  
That monster, Custom, who our moral sense does eat,  
The evil genius of bad habits, is an angel yet in this,  
That to the custom of habits fair and good,  
He likewise gives us ease in adopting the outer garment  
Of good as well as bad. Refrain thus tonight,  
And that will lend a kind of ease  
To the next abstinence; the next more easy still;  
For habit can almost uproot inherent nature,  
And either overcome the devil or cast him out

With wondrous potency. Once more, good night;  
And when you kneel for blessing,  
Then I will blessing beg from you. As for this same  
lord, (*Pointing to Polonius*)

I do repent; but heaven has so pleased it,  
To punish me as instrument of his death, and him  
through me,

In making me its scourge and minister.  
I will dispose of him, and will well account for  
The death I gave him. So, again, good night.  
I have been cruel to you, only to be kind;  
Else bad begins, and worse remains behind.  
One word more, good lady.

*Queen.* What shall I do?  
*Hamlet.* Not this, by any means, that I am bidding  
you do:

Let the bloated king tempt you again to bed,  
Pinch wantonly your cheek, call you his mouse;  
And let him, for a couple of reeking kisses,  
Or by fondling your neck with his damned fingers,  
Make you disclose this whole affair,  
That I am not really mad,  
But only very crafty. It were good you let him know;  
For who except a queen, fair, sober, wise,  
Would from a toad, a bat, a tom-cat,  
Such intimate concerns hide? who would do so?  
No, in spite of good sense and secrecy,  
Unloose the basket on the house's top,  
Let the birds fly, and, like the famous ape,  
To try the experiment of creeping in the basket,  
Leaping after them, and so break your own neck down.

*Queen.* Be assured that if words are made of breath,  
And breath of life, I have no life to breathe  
What you have said to me.

*Hamlet.* I must go to England; do you know that?

*Queen.* Alas,  
I had forgotten; it is so decided.

*Hamlet.* There are letters sealed; and my two school-mates,  
Whom I will trust as I will adders fanged,  
Bear the mandate; they must prepare the way  
That leads into the knavish plot laid for me; let it work;  
For it is the best sport to have the bomb-thrower  
Blown up by his own bomb; and it shall go hard,  
But I will go a yard deeper than the mines,  
And blow them toward the moon. 'Tis sweet indeed,  
When in one direction two crafts directly collide!  
This dead man shall speed my departure.  
I'll lug the carcass into the next room.  
Mother, good night. Indeed, this counsellor  
Is now most still, most secretive, and most grave,  
Who was, in life, a foolish, prating knave.  
Come, sir,—to have an end of you and your speeches.  
Good night, mother.

*(Exeunt individually; Hamlet dragging Polonius' body.)*

## ACT IV

### *Scene 1. A room in the castle.*

*Enter King, Queen, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern.*

*King.* There's something significant in these sighs;  
these deep breathings

You must translate into meaning; it is fit that we  
understand them.

Where is your son?

*Queen.* Give up this place to us a little while.

*(Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern)*

Ah, my good lord, what have I seen this night!

*King.* What, Gertrude? How is Hamlet?

*Queen.* Mad as the sea and wind, when both contend  
To determine which is mightier;<sup>1</sup> in an ungoverned fit,  
Behind the wall-curtain hearing something stir,  
He whips out rapier, cries 'A rat, a rat!'  
And in this unfounded apprehension, kills  
The unseen good old man.

*King.* O heavy deed!

It had been so with me, had I been there;

His liberty is full of threats to all,

To you yourself, to us, to every one.

Alas, how shall this bloody act be explained?

It will be laid upon us, whose foresight

Should have kept controlled, restrained, and out of  
society,

<sup>1</sup> "The Queen both follows her son's injunction in keeping up the belief in his madness, and, with maternal ingenuity, makes it the excuse for his rash deed" (Clarke).

This mad young man ; but so great was our love,  
 We refused to admit what measures were most fitting,  
 And like the victim of a foul disease,  
 To prevent its becoming known, let it feed  
 Even on the pith of life. Where has he gone?  
*Queen.* To draw away the body he has killed ;  
 And over him his very madness, like some precious ore  
 In a mine of metals base,  
 Shows itself pure. He weeps for what he has done.<sup>2</sup>  
*King.* O Gertrude, come away !  
 When sunrise touches the mountain-peaks  
 We shall deport him hence ; and this foul deed  
 We must, with all the majesty and skill we can  
 summon,  
 Both countenance and excuse. Ho, Guildenstern !

*Re-enter Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.*

Friends both, find others to assist you,—  
 Hamlet in his madness has slain Polonius,  
 And has dragged the body from his mother's apart-  
 ment,—  
 Go search him out ; speak gently to him, and bring the  
 body  
 Into the chapel. I pray you, hasten.

*(Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern)*

Come, Gertrude, we'll summon our wisest friends,  
 And let them know both what we mean to do,  
 And what has been untimely done ; in order, perchance,  
 that slander,  
 Whose whisper to the limits of the world,  
 As level as the cannon to the target-eye,

<sup>2</sup> "Either this is an entire invention of the Queen, or Hamlet's mockeries had been succeeded by sorrow" (Moberly). We think the latter.



Transports his deadly shot, may miss our name,  
And hit the invulnerable air. O, come away!  
My soul is filled with discord and dismay.

*(Exeunt)*

*Scene 2. Another room in the castle.*

*Enter Hamlet.*

*Hamlet.* He's safely stowed away.

*Rosencrantz.* } *(Within)* Hamlet! Lord Hamlet!  
*Guildestern.* }

*Hamlet.* But, hush, what noise is that? Who calls on  
Hamlet? O, here they come.

*Enter Rosencrantz and Guildestern.*

*Rosencrantz.* What have you done, my lord, with the  
dead body?

*Hamlet.* Compounded it back to dust, to which it was  
kin.

*Rosencrantz.* Tell us where it is, that we may convey  
it thence

And carry it into the chapel.

*Hamlet.* Do not believe it.

*Rosencrantz.* Believe what?

*Hamlet.* That I must take your advice and not my  
own. Besides, when questioned by a sponge, what  
reply should be made by the son of a king?

*Rosencrantz.* Do you take me for a sponge, my lord?

*Hamlet.* Yes, sir; one that soaks up the king's  
favours, his rewards, and his authorities. But  
such officials do the king best service in the long  
run. He keeps them like an ape does nuts, in the

corner of his jaw; first to be mouthed, and finally swallowed. When he needs what information you have gathered, it is merely a matter of squeezing you, and, sponge, you shall be dry again.

*Rosencrantz.* I do not understand you, my lord.

*Hamlet.* I am glad of it; a cunning remark is lost in the ear of a fool.

*Rosencrantz.* My lord, you must tell us where the body is, and go in with us to the king.

*Hamlet.* The body is with the king, but the king is not with the body.<sup>3</sup> The king is a thing,—

*Guildenstern.* A thing, my lord!

*Hamlet.* Of no account. Hide fox, and all after.<sup>4</sup>

*Scene 3. Another room in the castle.*

*Enter King, with Attendants.*

*King.* I have sent in search of him, and to find the body.

How dangerous it is that this man goes loose!

Yet we must not enforce the severe laws against him:

He's loved by the unthinking multitudes,

Who judge not by reason, but by outward appearance;

And, where it is thus, the offender's punishment is weighed in detail,

But never the gravity of his offence. To carry all smoothly and evenly,

This precipitate sending him away must seem

A long-considered arrangement; diseases grown desperate

<sup>3</sup> This is probably mere nonsense, but the *Variorum* records interpretations by scholars who deem it sense. A plausible example is: "The body (of responsibility for the murder) lies ultimately with the king, but the king is not with the corpse (as he ought to be)" (Lionel W. Lyde, Glasgow Academy).

<sup>4</sup> A plausible equivalent given by Lyde for this line is: "When the old fox is hidden, all must set off to find him."

Are only relieved by desperate remedies,  
Or not at all.

*Enter Rosencrantz.*

How now! what has happened?

*Rosencrantz.* Where the dead body has been concealed, my lord,

We cannot learn from him.

*King.* But where is he?

*Rosencrantz.* Just without, my lord; guarded, awaiting your pleasure.

*King.* Bring him before me.

*Rosencrantz.* Ho, Guildenstern! bring in my lord.

*Enter Hamlet, and Guildenstern.*

*King.* Now, Hamlet, where's Polonius?

*Hamlet.* At supper.

*King.* At supper! where?

*Hamlet.* Not where he does the eating, but where he is being eaten; a certain convocation of worms which eat politicians are now at him. Your worm is the only emperor in diet; we fatten all other creatures to fatten ourselves, and we fatten ourselves for maggots. Your fat king and your lean beggar is but varying service, two dishes, but for only one table; that's the end.

*King.* Alas, alas!

*Hamlet.* A man may fish with a worm that has eaten of a king, and then eat the fish that ate that worm.

*King.* What do you mean by this?

*Hamlet.* Nothing, except to show you how a king may make a journey of state through the guts of a beggar.

*King.* Where is Polonius?

*Hamlet.* In heaven. Send there to see: if your messenger does not find him there, seek him in the

other place yourself. But, indeed, if you do not find him within the present month, you may nose him as you go upstairs into the lobby.

*King.* Go seek him there. (*To some Attendants*)

*Hamlet.* He'll stay there till you come.

(*Exeunt Attendants*)

*King.* Hamlet, this deed, for your particular safety, Which we do cherish, as we sorely grieve For what you have done, makes it necessary to send you hence

With hot haste; therefore, prepare yourself.

The boat is ready, and the wind favourable,  
Your companions attend, and everything is bent  
Toward England.

*Hamlet.* To England?

*King.* Yes, Hamlet.

*Hamlet.* Good.

*King.* So it is, if you appreciate our purpose.

*Hamlet.* I see a cherub who sees it. But, come: to England! Farewell, dear mother.

*King.* And thy loving father, Hamlet.

*Hamlet.* My mother only: father and mother are man and wife; man and wife are one flesh; and hence, my mother. Come, away to England! (*Exit*)

*King.* Follow at his heels; tempt him aboard with speed;

Do not delay; I must have him away from here to-night.

Away! for everything else is sealed and done  
That depends on this affair; I pray, make haste.

(*Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*)

And thou, sovereign of England, if my good will thou valu'st at all,—

For my supremacy over thee may well make thee cognizant,

Since the scar yet looks red and raw  
Inflicted by the Danish sword, and thy awe  
Pays free homage to us,—thou mayst not indifferently  
regard  
My royal mandate; the full import of which is,  
By letters earnestly entreating  
The immediate death of Hamlet. Do it, England;  
For, like the fever, in my blood he rages,  
And thou must cure me. Until I know 'tis done,  
Whatever my chances for happiness, my joys have not  
begun. *(Exit)*

*Scene 4. A plain in Denmark.*

*Enter Fortinbras, a Captain, and Soldiers, marching.*

*Fortinbras.* Go, captain, greet the Danish king for  
me;  
Tell him that by his official permission Fortinbras  
Claims the escort of the promised right of way  
Over his kingdom. You already know the place of  
meeting.  
If it should be that his majesty desires to interview me,  
I shall be glad to pay respect in person;  
And tell him so.  
*Captain.* I will do it, my lord.  
*Fortinbras.* March slowly on.

*(Exeunt Fortinbras and Soldiers)*

*Enter Hamlet, Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, and others.*

*Hamlet.* Good sir, whose forces are these?

*Captain.* They are from Norway, sir.

*Hamlet.* Having what destination, sir, I pray you?

*Captain.* Against some part of Poland.

*Hamlet.* Who commands them, sir?

*Captain.* The nephew of the aged king of Norway,—  
Fortinbras.

*Hamlet.* Do they go against the main body of Poland,  
sir,

Or merely some frontier?

*Captain.* To tell the truth without any addition,  
We go to gain a little patch of ground  
That has in itself no value save in name.

For a rental of only five ducats I would not lease it;  
Nor will it yield to Norway or to Poland  
A greater price, should it be sold into absolute pos-  
session.

*Hamlet.* Why, then, the Poles will never defend it.

*Captain.* Yes, for it already is garrisoned.

*Hamlet.* Two thousand souls and twenty thousand  
ducats

Will not settle the question of this straw;  
This is the hidden abscess of much wealth and peace,  
Which, breaking inwardly, shows no cause without  
Why the man dies. I humbly thank you, sir.

*Captain.* Good-bye, sir. (*Exit*)

*Rosencrantz.* Is it your pleasure now to go, my lord?

*Hamlet.* I'll be with you directly. Go on, a little  
ahead. (*Exeunt all but Hamlet*)

How every occasion points the accusing finger,  
To spur my dull revenge! What is a man  
If his chief good and the way he employs his time  
Is but to sleep and feed? A beast, no more.<sup>5</sup>  
Surely He who made us with such latitude of reason,  
To review the past and anticipate the future,  
Gave us not that capability and godlike power  
To moulder in us unused. Now, whether it be

<sup>5</sup> "For what are men better than sheep or goats  
That nourish a blind life within the brain,  
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer  
Both for themselves and those who call them friend?"

—Tennyson, *The Passing of Arthur*, ll. 418-421.

The beast's forgetfulness, or some cowardly scruple  
From thinking too precisely about affairs,—  
A thought, which, quartered, has but one part wisdom  
And always three parts cowardice,—I know not  
Why yet I live to say 'This thing's still to be done,'  
Since I have cause enough, and will, and strength, and  
means

To do it. Examples as coarse as earth exhort me;  
Witness this army of great size and cost,  
Led by a delicate and tender prince,  
Whose spirit by divine ambition inspired,  
Disregards the uncertain outcome,  
Exposing all that is mortal and unsure  
For all that fortune, death, and danger dare,  
Only for an egg-shell.<sup>6</sup> Rightly to be great  
Is not to stir without great cause,  
But to find no provocation too small  
When honour is at stake. What is my standing, then,  
Who have a father killed, a mother stained,  
Things to excite both reason and emotion,  
And allow everything to sleep? while to my shame I see  
The imminent death of twenty thousand men,  
Who for the trifle and toy of reputation  
Go to their graves like beds, fight for a plot of ground  
Whereon the numbers cannot try the cause,  
Which is not of sufficient area  
To hide the slain?<sup>7</sup> O, from this time forth  
Let my thoughts be bloody, or nothing worth!

<sup>6</sup> "Fortinbras, marching to the drum, to win a dunghill" (John Masefield).

<sup>7</sup> The introduction of Fortinbras serves the double function in the drama of (1) throwing the character of Hamlet, who thought only of the unseen empire of spirit rather than worldly empire, into sharp relief; (2) having a person of royal lineage take charge of the affairs of Denmark at the end of the play.

*Scene 5. Elsinore. A room in the castle.*

*Enter Queen, Horatio, and a Gentleman.*

*Queen.* I will not speak with her.

*Gentleman.* She is greatly troubled, indeed, distracted;  
Her moods must greatly be pitied.

*Queen.* What would she have?

*Gentleman.* She speaks much of her father; says she  
hears

There are tricks in the world; and hems, and beats  
at her heart;

Kicks spitefully at trifles; speaks things of uncertain  
import,

That make but half sense: her talking is quite empty,  
Yet her confused use of language moves

The hearers to draw conclusions; they guess at its  
meaning,

And patch up the words to fit in their own thoughts;  
Which, as her winks and nods and gestures furnish  
them,

Indeed would make one think there might be inferred,  
Though nothing certainly, yet much of misfortune.

*Horatio.* It would be well if she were spoken with;  
for she may strew

Dangerous conjectures in mischief-hatching minds.

*Queen.* Let her come in. (*Exit Gentleman*)

(*Aside*) To my sick soul, true to sin's real nature,  
Each trifle seems but the prologue to some great  
disaster;

So full of ignorant suspicion is guilt,  
It betrays itself in seeking to prevent betrayal.

*Re-enter Gentleman, with Ophelia.*

*Ophelia.* Where is the beauteous majesty of Den-  
mark?



*Queen.* How now, Ophelia!

*Ophelia.* (*Sings*)

'How should I your true-love know  
From another such one?  
By his cockle hat and staff,  
And sandal shoes.'<sup>8</sup>

*Queen.* Alas, sweet lady, what is the meaning of this song?

*Ophelia.* What say you? nay, I pray you, listen.

(*Sings*)

'He is dead and gone, lady,  
And is dead and gone;  
At his head a grass-green turf,  
At his heels, a stone.'

O, ho!

*Queen.* Nay, but, Ophelia,——

*Ophelia.* I pray you, listen.

(*Sings*)

'White was his shroud as mountain snow,'——

*Enter King.*

*Queen.* Alas, look here, my lord.

*Ophelia.* (*Sings*)

'Bedecked with sweet flowers;  
Which, with weeping, to the grave did not go,  
With true love-showers.'

*King.* How do you do, pretty lady?

*Ophelia.* Well, God reward you! They say the owl  
was at first a baker's daughter. Lord, we know  
what we are, but know not what we may become.  
God be at your table!

<sup>8</sup> As is often the case, insanity talks in the language revealing the original cause or causes of the mental collapse. Ophelia's first verse concerns Hamlet; the second, Polonius. The cockle-hat was the sign that a pilgrim wearing it had been overseas. It was often used as a disguise by lovers. It may refer to Hamlet's journey to England.

*King.* Fancies about her father.

*Ophelia.* I pray you, let's have no words about this;  
but when they ask you what it means, say you this:  
(*Sings*)

'Tomorrow is Saint Valentine's day,  
All early in the morning,  
I a maiden at your window will be,  
To be your Valentine.'

*King.* How long has she been in this state?

*Ophelia.* I hope all will be well. We must be patient;  
but I cannot choose but weep, to think how they  
should lay him so, in the cold ground. My brother  
shall know about it; and so I thank you for your  
good advice. Come, my coach! Good night, ladies;  
good night, sweet ladies; good night, good night.

(*Exit*)

*King.* Follow her closely; keep close watch upon her,  
I pray you.

(*Exit Horatio*)

O this is the poison of deep grief; it all springs  
From her father's death. O Gertrude, Gertrude,  
When sorrows come, they come not individually,  
But in battalions! First, her father slain;  
Next your son gone; and he the violent author  
Of his own removal: the people disturbed,  
Thick and unwholesome in their thoughts and whispers,  
About good Polonius' death; and we have done but  
foolishly,

In precipitate haste to inter him; poor Ophelia,  
Her mind separated from her true self,  
Without the which we are only pictures, or else beasts;  
Last of all, and worse than all these,  
Her brother has in secret arrived from France,  
Broods over these strange happenings, is reserved in  
his conduct,  
And does not lack talebearers to infect his ear

With distorted accounts of his father's death,  
And, necessarily, not fully informed,  
They will not scruple to arraign me  
To whosoever will listen. O my dear Gertrude, this,  
Like a scattering-cannon, in many places  
Metes out to me possibilities of death.

*(Noise within)*

*Queen.* Alas, what noise is that?

*King.* Where are my Swiss guards? Let them guard  
the door.

*Enter another Gentleman.*

What is the matter?

*Gentleman.* Save yourself, my lord;  
The ocean, overflowing its boundaries,  
Devours the shallows with not more impetuous haste  
Than young Laertes, with a riotous armed force,  
Overbears your officers. The rabble call him lord;  
And, as if the world's existence had just begun,  
Antiquity forgotten, custom not known,  
The ratifiers and support of any catchword,  
They cry, 'Let us choose; Laertes shall be king!'  
Caps, hands, and tongues applaud it to the clouds,  
'Laertes shall be king, Laertes king!'<sup>9</sup>

*Queen.* How cheerfully on the false trail they cry!  
You are on a false scent, you Danish dogs!

<sup>9</sup> Compare this with *Julius Caesar*, III, ii, l. 52, where, during Antony's funeral oration, the Third Citizen shouts: "Let him be Caesar." Such passages as these and the line a little later in this scene in *Hamlet*: "There's such divinity doth hedge a King," shows Shakespeare to have been a conservative in politics, probably never anticipating the possibilities of successful democracy. For this, in part, no doubt, H. G. Wells excludes the plays of Shakespeare from his proposed "Bible of Civilization." See *The Salvaging of Civilization*, by H. G. Wells (Macmillan, 1921), or *The Saturday Evening Post*, April 30, 1921, pp. 14, 15, for the Wells verdict.

(*Noise within*)

*King.* . They have crashed in the doors.

*Enter Laertes, with drawn sword; Danes following.*

*Laertes.* Where is this king? Sirs, stand you all without.

*Danes.* No, let us come in.

*Laertes.* I pray you, give me leave.

*Danes.* We will, we will. (*They retire outside*)

*Laertes.* I thank you; guard the door. O thou vile king,

Give me back my father!

*Queen.* Calmly, good Laertes. (*Laying hold of him*)

*Laertes.* Any drop of blood that's calm proclaims me  
a bastard,

Calls my father adulterer, and puts the harlot's brand  
Even here, between the chaste, unsullied brows  
Of my pure mother.

*King.* What's the reason, Laertes,  
That thy rebellion looks so giant-like?

Let him go, Gertrude; fear not for my safety.

There's such divinity doth hedge a king

That treason can but peep at what it would do,

And cannot act out its will. Tell me, Laertes,

Why thou art thus enraged. Let him go, Gertrude.

Speak, man.

*Laertes.* Where's my father?

*King.* Dead.

*Queen.* But not at his hand.

*King.* Let him demand his fill.

*Laertes.* How came he dead? I'll not be juggled with.  
To hell, allegiance! vows, to the blackest devil!<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> "Laertes is a boor who destroys intellect" (John Masefield).  
The character of Laertes, like that of Fortinbras, serves to  
throw that of Hamlet into sharp relief. Both have fathers to

Conscience and grace, to the profoundest pit!  
I dare damnation. On this position I stand,  
That for this world or the next I care not,<sup>11</sup>  
Let come what may; only, I'll be revenged  
Most thoroughly for my father.

*King.* Who shall prevent you?

*Laertes.* Only my own will, nothing else in the world;  
And, as for my means, I'll husband them so well  
That they shall go far with little.

*King.* Good Laertes,

If you desire to know the facts

Of your dear father's death, is it included in your  
revenge,

That with one grand sweep you will draw into it both  
friend and foe,

Winner and loser?

*Laertes.* None but his enemies.

*King.* Do you wish to know them, then?

*Laertes.* To his good friends thus I'll open wide my  
arms,

And, like the kind life-giving pelican,

Feed them with my own blood.

*King.* Why, now you are speaking  
Like a good child and a true gentleman.

That I am absolutely guiltless of your father's death,

And am most keenly touched with grief by it,

Shall penetrate your judgment as straight

As light does your eye.

revenge, and Laertes flings himself into headlong action, while Hamlet is extremely slow to act. But the contrast lies far deeper than this, as Masefield's trenchant remark implies. Laertes represents the superficial, reckless, irreverent type of mind, while Hamlet's mind is profound. Superficiality and reckless profanity are usually twins. Laertes has the spiritual sleeping-sickness. Hamlet is governed only by the finest of ethical motives in seeking the proper course of his revenge. For this reason critics are often misled in their estimates of Hamlet's true character.

<sup>11</sup> Compare *Macbeth*, III, ii, l. 16; also I, vii, ll. 5, 6.

*Danes.* (*Within*) Let her come in.

*Laertes.* How now! What noise is that?

*Re-enter Ophelia.*

O heat, dry up my brains! tears seven times salty  
Burn out the sense and faculty of my eyes!  
By heaven, thy madness shall be paid by weight,  
Till the scale turns the beam. O rose of May!  
Dear maid, kind sister, sweet Ophelia!  
O heavens! is it possible that a young maid's wits  
Should be as mortal as an old man's life?  
Nature is tender in love, and where 'tis tender  
It sends some precious token of itself  
Into the grave of that which it loves.

*Ophelia.* (*Sings*)

‘They bore him barefaced on the bier;

Hey non nonny, nonny, hey nonny;

And in his grave rained many a tear.’

Fare you well, my dove!

*Laertes.* Had you your wits and could persuade me  
to revenge,

It could not move me like this.

*Ophelia.* You must sing, ‘Down a-down, and you call  
him a-down-a’. Oh-h-h-h, how well the song goes  
to the spinning-wheel’s motion! It was a false  
steward that stole his master’s daughter.

*Laertes.* These meaningless words are more moving  
than had they meaning.

*Ophelia.* There’s rosemary,<sup>12</sup> that’s for remembrance;

<sup>12</sup> Rosemary comes from two Latin words, “ros marinus”, meaning sea-foam, and is in nowise a combination of rose and Mary. Ophelia gives Laertes rosemary and pansies (French: “pensées”, ‘thoughts’) for remembrance. Fennel (‘flattery’) and columbine (‘ingratitude’) are given to the king. Rue (‘grief and repentance’) appropriately is given to Gertrude. “With a difference” means that Ophelia wears it to symbolize the former and Gertrude the latter.

pray you, love, remember; and there are pansies,  
that's for thoughts.

*Laertes.* Precepts coming out of madness; thoughts  
and remembrance fitted.

*Ophelia.* There's fennel for you, and columbines;  
there's rue for you, and here's some for me; we  
may call it herb of grace on Sundays. O, you must  
wear your rue with a different meaning. There's  
a daisy. I would have given you some violets,  
but they all withered when my father died. They  
say he made a good end,——

*(Sings)* 'For bonny sweet Robin is all my joy.'

*Laertes.* Grief and affliction, suffering, even hell itself  
She can transform into beauty and charm.

*Ophelia.* *(Sings)*  
'And will he not come again?  
And will he not come again?  
No, no, he is dead,  
Go to thy death-bed;  
He will never come again.'

His beard was as white as snow,

All flaxen was his head;

He is gone, he is gone,

And we cast away moan:

God have mercy on his soul!

And on all Christian souls, I pray God. God be with  
you. *(Exit)*

*Laertes.* Do you see this, O God?

*King.* Laertes, I must share your grief,

Or you will deny me the right. Go but apart,

Choose of your wisest friends whomsoever you will,

And they shall hear and judge between you and me.

If by direct or indirect hand

They find me implicated, we shall our kingdom give,

Our crown, our life, and all that we call ours,

To you in satisfaction; but if not,

But be content to lend your patience to me,  
And I shall be co-worker with your soul.  
To give it due satisfaction.

*Laertes.* Let it be so;  
The means by which he died, his obscure burial,—  
No trophy, sword, or escutcheon o'er his bones,  
No rite of nobility or formal ceremony,—  
These cry to be heard, as 'twere from heaven to earth,  
So that I must call it in question.

*King.* And so you shall;  
And where the guilt is, let the great axe fall.  
I pray you, come with me. (*Exeunt*)

*Scene 6. Another room in the castle.*

*Enter Horatio and a Servant.*

*Horatio.* Who is it that wishes to speak to me?

*Servant.* Sailors, sir; they say that they have letters  
for you.

*Horatio.* Let them come in. (*Exit Servant*)

I do not know from what part of the world  
I could be greeted, unless from Lord Hamlet.

*Enter Sailors.*

*1 Sailor.* God bless you, sir.

*Horatio.* May he bless thee, too.

*1 Sailor.* He shall, sir, if it so please Him. There's  
a letter for you, sir,—it comes from the ambassa-  
dor that was bound for England,—if your name  
be Horatio, as I am let to know it is.

*Horatio.* (*Reads*) 'Horatio, when you shall have  
looked through this letter, give these fellows some  
means of access to the king; they have letters also  
for him. Before we were two days out at sea, a



pirate vessel of very warlike equipment gave us chase. Finding ourselves too slow of sail, we had to put on an enforced valour. In the grapple I boarded her. At that very instant they got clear of our ship, so that I alone became their prisoner. They have dealt with me like merciful thieves: but they were aware of what they did; I am to do a good turn to them. Let the king have the letters I have sent, and you hasten to me, with as much speed as you would flee from death. I have words to speak in your ear that will strike you dumb, and yet they are almost incapable of expressing the seriousness of the matter. These good fellows will conduct you to where I am abiding. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern still hold their course toward England; of them I have much to tell you. Farewell. He whom you know to be yours,  
HAMLET.'

Come, I shall give you conduct for these your letters,  
And shall do it all the speedier, so that you may direct  
me

To him from whom you brought them.

*Scene 7. Another room in the castle.*

*Enter King and Laertes.*

*King.* Now your knowledge of the affair must fully acquit me,

And you must put me down in your heart as a friend,  
Since you have heard, and with a comprehending ear,  
That he who did your noble father slay,  
Was pursuing my life.

*Laertes.* So it clearly appears. But tell me,  
Why did you not proceed against these deeds,  
So criminal and life-destroying in their nature,

Since by your desire for safety, wisdom, and all things else,

You were greatly wrought up.

*King.* O, for two particular reasons,  
Which may to you, perhaps, seem very weak,  
But yet to me were strong. The queen, his mother,  
Lives almost by his presence; and as for myself,—  
My virtue or my curse, whichever it may be,—  
She's so closely bound up with my life and soul  
That, as a star which moves not but in fixed orbit,  
I could not, save through her direction. The other  
motive, —

Why to a public account I could not call him,—  
Is the great love the common people bear him;  
Who, dipping all his faults in their affection,  
Would, like the spring of petrifying waters,  
Transform his fetters to ornaments; so that my arrows,  
Of too light timber for so strong a wind,  
Would have reverted to my bow again,  
And not gone where I aimed them.

*Laertes.* And thus I have a noble father lost,  
A sister driven into a state of madness,  
Whose worth, if I may praise what was,  
Made her conspicuous above all rivals  
For her perfection. But my revenge will come.

*King.* Do not lose sleep on that account. You must  
not think

That I am made of stuff so flat and dull  
That I shall let my beard be shaken by danger  
And look on it as pastime. You shortly shall hear  
more.

I loved your father, and I love also myself,  
And that, I hope, will teach you to imagine,—

*Enter a Messenger, with letters.*

How now! what news?

*Messenger.* Letters, my lord, from Hamlet:

This to your majesty; this to the queen.

*King.* From Hamlet! Who brought them?

*Messenger.* Sailors, my lord, they say; I did not see them:

They were given to me by Claudio; he took them  
From him who brought them.

*King.* Laertes, you shall hear them.  
Leave us.

*(Reads)* 'High and mighty: You shall know by this  
that I am set naked on your kingdom. Tomorrow  
I shall beg leave to stand in your royal presence,  
when I shall, first asking your pardon for it, re-  
count the occasion of my sudden and stranger  
than sudden, return. HAMLET.'

What does this mean? Have all the rest come back?  
Or is it some delusion, and not what it seems?

*Laertes.* Do you know the hand?

*King.* 'Tis Hamlet's handwriting. 'Naked!'

And in a postscript here he says 'alone.'

Can you enlighten me?

*Laertes.* It bewilders me, my lord. But let him come;  
It warms the very sickness of my heart,  
That I shall live and fling it in his teeth,  
'Thus did'st thou!'

*King.* If it be thus, Laertes—

And how should it not be so? How otherwise?—

Will you be governed by my advice?

*Laertes.* Yes, my lord,

If you only will not overrule me to make peace.

*King.* Nought but your own peace. If he be now  
returned,

Refusing to pursue his voyage, and if he means  
Not again to undertake it, I mean to work him  
To an exploit, now completely formed in mind,  
Under whose execution he cannot choose but fall;  
And for his death no wind of blame shall blow,  
But even his mother shall not suspect the plot

And call it an accident.

*Laertes.* My lord, I will be governed,  
Particularly if you could devise it so  
That I might be the instrument.

*King.* It happens rightly.  
You have been much talked of since your travels,  
And that in Hamlet's hearing, for a talent  
Wherein, 'tis said, you shine. The sum of your achievements

Did not together arouse such envy in him,  
As did that one, and it, in my regard,  
The one of unworthiest rank.

*Laertes.* What was it, my lord?

*King.* A very ribbon on the cap of youth,  
Yet, needful, too; for youth no less is becoming  
To the light and careless livery it wears  
Than settled age becomes its sables and its garb,  
Suggesting prosperity and gravity. Two months ago  
There was here a gentleman from Normandy;—  
I've seen myself, and served against, the French,  
And they have great skill on horseback; but this gallant  
Had witchcraft in his art; he stayed fast in the saddle,  
And to such wondrous feats brought his horse  
It seemed as if he had been one in body and nature  
With the brave animal. So far he surpassed my  
imagination,

That I, striving to invent new shapes and tricks,  
Came far short of what he did.

*Laertes.* A Norman, was it?

*King.* A Norman.

*Laertes.* Upon my life, Lamond!

*King.* The very same man.

*Laertes.* I know him well; he is the jewel, indeed,  
The gem of all the nation.

*King.* He made his confession concerning you,  
And gave such report of your mastership  
In the art and exercise of self-defense,

That he cried out 'twould be a sight, indeed,  
If one could match you. The fencers of their nation,  
He vowed, had neither motion, guard, nor eye,  
When you opposed them. Sir, this report of his  
Did envenom Hamlet so with envy  
That he could nothing do but wish and beg  
Your immediate coming back, to play with him.  
Now, out of this,—

*Laertes.* What out of this, my lord?

*King.* Laertes, was your father dear to you?

Or are you like the painting of a sorrow,—  
A face without a heart?

*Laertes.* Why ask this?

*King.* Not that I think you did not love your father,  
But that I know that love begins in time,  
And that I see, in instances of experience,  
That time moderates the spark and fire of it.  
There exists within the very flame of love  
A kind of wick or snuff that will abate it,  
And nothing maintains a uniform goodness always;  
For goodness, growing to excess,  
Dies from surfeit. Whatever we desire to do,  
We should do at the time; for this 'desire' changes,  
And has abatements and delays as numerous  
As there are tongues, hands, or accidents;  
And then the 'should' is like the blood-drawing sigh,  
Which injures while it relieves. But, to the bottom  
of the ulcer—:

Hamlet is coming back. What would you be willing  
to undertake,  
To show yourself your father's son in deeds  
More than in words?

*Laertes.* To cut his throat in the church.

*King.* No place, indeed, should give protection to  
murder;

Revenge, on the other hand, should have no bounds.  
But, good Laertes,

Only do this: keep closely within your room.  
Hamlet, returned, shall know you have come home.  
We'll set those on who shall praise your excellence,  
And doubly varnish o'er the fame  
The Frenchman gave you; will bring you, at last,  
together,  
And make wagers on your heads. He, being in-  
cautious,  
Unsuspecting, and free from all conspiring,  
Will not examine closely the foils, so that, with ease  
Or with a little shuffling, you may choose  
A sword unblunted, and, with a treacherous thrust,  
Requite him for your father's death.

*Laertes.*

I will do it;

And for that purpose I'll anoint my sword.  
I bought a poisoned ointment from a quack,  
So deadly that but to dip a knife in it,  
And drawing blood, there is no poultice possible  
Compounded from all the herbs that have virtue  
From being gathered by moonlight, that can save the  
creature from death

That is but scratched with it; I'll touch the point  
With this poison, so that, if I wound him slightly,  
It will be death to him.

*King.*

Let us further think of this;

Consider what time and means will be convenient  
To enable us to act our parts. If this should fail,  
So that our real intent betray itself,  
It were better not attempted; therefore this project  
Should have a second one to back it, that might work  
If the first should burst in its trial. Soft! let me see:  
I'll make a solemn wager on your cunning,—  
I have it!

When through exercising you are hot and thirsty,—  
And make your bouts more violent for that end,—  
And when he calls for drink, I'll have in preparation

A goblet for the purpose, wherefrom but sipping,  
If he perchance escape your venom'd thrust,  
Our object shall be yet gained. But, stay, what noise?

*Enter Queen.*

How now, sweet queen?

*Queen.* One woe treads upon another's heel,  
So fast do they follow. Your sister's drowned, Laertes.

*Laertes.* Drowned? O, where?

*Queen.* There is a willow growing aslant a creek,  
That shows its white leaves in the glassy stream;  
There with fantastic garlands did she come  
Of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, and wild orchids,  
That free-spoken shepherds give a coarser name,  
But our chaste maids do dead men's fingers call them;  
There, on the drooping boughs her coronal wreaths  
Clambering to hang, a treacherous sliver broke,  
At which down her garlanded trophies and herself  
Fell in the weeping creek. Her clothes spread wide,  
And, mermaid-like, a while they bore her up;  
Meantime she chanted snatches of old psalms,  
As though insensible of her own distress,  
Or like a creature native and accustomed  
To that element; but long it could not be  
Until her garments, heavy with their drink,  
Pulled the poor wretch from her melodious hymn  
To muddy death.

*Laertes.* Alas, then is she drowned?

*Queen.* Drowned, drowned!

*Laertes.* Too much of water hast thou, poor Ophelia,  
And therefore I forbid my tears; but yet  
It is our habit: nature maintains her custom,  
Let shame do what it will; when these are dried,  
The woman in me will be gone. Adieu, my lord;  
I have a speech of fire which would gladly blaze

But that this folly extinguishes it. (*Exit*)

*King.* Let's follow, Gertrude;

How much I had to do to calm his rage!

Now I fear this will give it a fresh start;

Therefore, let us follow. (*Exeunt*)



## ACT V

### *Scene 1. A churchyard.*

*Enter two Clowns,<sup>1</sup> with spades, etc.*

*1 Clown.* Is she to be buried in a Christian burial-place who wilfully seeks her own damnation?<sup>2</sup>

*2 Clown.* I tell thee she is; and therefore let's make her grave at once. The coroner hath determined her case, and finds it Christian burial.

*1 Clown.* How can that be, unless she drowned herself as an act of self-defense?

*2 Clown.* Why, 'tis found so.

*1 Clown.* It must not be 'se defendendo,' in defending one's self; it cannot be otherwise. For here lies the point: If I drown myself intentionally, it argues an act, and an act hath three divisions: it is, to act, to do, and to perform; therefore, she drowned herself intentionally.

*2 Clown.* Nay, but listen, goodman delver,——

*1 Clown.* Give me time. Here lies the water; good. Here stands the man; good. If the man go to this water and drown himself, it is, will he, will he not, he goes,—mark that; but if the water come to him and drown him, he drowns not himself;

<sup>1</sup> "Clown" in Shakespeare means usually simply a lout, a boor, or what is provincially termed in America a 'clodhopper' or 'bumpkin'. The young student is apt mistakenly to think of a circus clown.

<sup>2</sup> The humour of this scene is inevitably reduced by making the two Grave-diggers say what they mean, particularly the first, who is always represented on the stage as an ignorant, dirty, villainous-looking but harmless, individual.

therefore, he who is not guilty of his own death shortens not his own life.

*2 Clown.* But is this the law?

*1 Clown.* Yes, by the Virgin, it is; coroner's inquest law.

*2 Clown.* Will you hear the truth about it? If this had not been a noblewoman, she would not have been buried in a Christian burying-ground.

*1 Clown.* Why, there you speak truth; and more the pity that great folk should have encouragement in this world to drown or hang themselves, more than their fellow-Christians. Come; my spade. There are no gentlemen more ancient than gardeners, ditchers, and grave-makers; they continue the profession of Adam.

*2 Clown.* Was he a gentleman? \*

*1 Clown.* He was the first who ever bore arms.

*2 Clown.* Why, he had none.

*1 Clown.* What, art thou a heathen? How dost thou understand the Scripture? The Scripture says, 'Adam digged';<sup>4</sup> how could he dig without arms? I'll put another question to thee. If thou answerest not to the point, confess thyself and be,—

*2 Clown.* Come on.

*1 Clown.* Who is he that builds stronger than either the mason, the shipwright, or the carpenter?

*2 Clown.* The gallows-maker; for that frame outlasts a thousand occupants.

*1 Clown.* I like thy wisdom well, in good faith. The gallows does well; but how does it well? It does

\* That is, literally, a "nobleman"? 'Gentle' in Elizabethan English usually connotes 'noble' or 'of good family', from the Latin 'gens', 'family', 'tribe'. The Second Clown asks how a manual labourer could be a 'gentleman'.

<sup>4</sup> Obviously a literary blunder on the part of the First Clown. The allusion is not from the Bible, but an old fourteenth century couplet used by the labour agitators of Chaucer's day:

"When Adam delved, and Eve span,  
O who was then the gentleman?"

well to those who do ill: now, thou dost ill to say the gallows is built stronger than the church; therefore, the gallows may do well to thee! To the riddle again; come.

2 *Clown*. 'Who builds stronger than a mason, a shipwright, or a carpenter?'

1 *Clown*. Yes, tell me that, and your day's work is done.

2 *Clown*. By the Virgin, now I can tell you.

1 *Clown*. To it.

2 *Clown*. By the mass, I cannot tell.

*Enter Hamlet and Horatio afar off.*

1 *Clown*. Cudgel thy brains no more about it, for a stupid ass will not hasten his pace with beating; and, when you are next asked this question, say, 'A grave-maker'; for the houses which he makes last till doomsday. Go, get thee to Yaughan's, and fetch me a drink of liquor.

*(He digs and sings)*

'In youth, when I did love, did love,

I thought it was very sweet,

To shorten, O, the time, for-a my benefit,

O, methought there was nothing more fit.'<sup>5</sup>

*Hamlet*. Has this fellow no sentiment for his business, that he sings at grave-making?

*Horatio*. Habit has made it naturally easy for him.

*Hamlet*. 'Tis even so. The hand uncalled for has the finer sensitiveness.

1 *Clown*. *(Sings)*

'But age, with his stealing steps,

Hath clawed me into his clutch,

<sup>5</sup> Concerning this passage, Professor John L. Lowes, of Harvard, writes: "The Clown is singing a humorously garbled version of an actual song, attributed to Lord Vaux, and printed in *Tottel's Miscellany* (1557). See the *Variorum* for the real text, which is worth looking up and comparing. The 'O's' and 'Ah's' merely represent the exertion of digging."

And hath shipped me into the land,  
As if I had never been young.'

*(Tosses up a skull)*

*Hamlet.* That skull had a tongue in it, and could sing once. How the knave knocks it on the ground, as though it were the jaw-bone of Cain, who committed the first murder. It might be the pate of a politician, which this fool now outwits; one who tried to circumvent God, might it not?

*Horatio.* It might, my lord.

*Hamlet.* Or of a courtier, who could say, 'Good morning, sweet lord! How dost thou, good lord?' This might be my Lord So-and-so, who praised my Lord Such-a-one's horse, when he meant to beg it,—might it not?

*Horatio.* Ay, my lord.

*Hamlet.* Why, even so; and now, visiting my Lady Worm; jawless, and knocked about the head with a sexton's spade. Here's fine revolution, if we had the knack of seeing it. Did these bones cost no more in their breeding than to make them fit only for playing at bowls? My own ache to think about it.

*I Clown. (Sings)*

'A pick-axe, and a spade, a spade,  
For and a shrouding sheet;  
O, a pit of clay for to be made  
For such a guest is meet.'

*(Tosses up another skull)*

*Hamlet.* There's another one; why may not that be the skull of a lawyer? Where are his subtleties now, his quibbles, his cases, his tenures, and his tricks? Why does he allow this rude knave now to knock him about the pate with a dirty shovel, and will not give a reason for his action of unlawful beating? Hum! This fellow might be in his time a great buyer of land with his statutes,

his bonds of surety, his fines, his double promissories, his recoveries. Is this the fine of his fines, and the recovery of his recoveries, to have his fine pate full of fine dirt?<sup>6</sup> Will his vouchers now vouchsafe to him no more his purchases, and doubly executed ones, too, than the length and breadth of a perforated parchment? The very deeds of conveyance to his land will scarcely be contained in this box, and must the owner thereof have no more, ha?

*Horatio.* Not one iota more, my lord.

*Hamlet.* Is not parchment made of sheep-skin?

*Horatio.* Yes, my lord, and of calf-skin, too.

*Hamlet.* Well, they are only sheep and calves who seek security in legal parchments. I will speak to this fellow. Whose grave is this, sir?

*I Clown.* Mine, sir.

(*Sings*) 'O, a pit of clay for to be made  
For such a guest is meet.'

*Hamlet.* I think it must be thine, indeed, for thou liest in it.

*I Clown.* You are lying out of it, sir, and therefore it is not yours. For my part, I do not lie in it, and yet it is mine.

*Hamlet.* Thou liest about it, to be in it, and yet say it is thine. 'Tis for the dead, not the living; therefore, thou liest.

*I Clown.* 'Tis a speedy lie, sir; it will fly away again, from me to you.<sup>7</sup>

*Hamlet.* For what man dost thou dig it?

*I Clown.* For no man, sir.

*Hamlet.* For what woman, then?

<sup>6</sup> Observe the fourfold pun on "fine". The first 'fine' means "end" (Latin, *finis*), the second is the legal term, the third means 'elegant', and the fourth, 'pulverized'.

<sup>7</sup> The scene here is a sharp contrast between natural, unconscious wit on the part of the Clown, and the cultivated, intellectual wit of Hamlet.

*I Clown.* For no woman, either.

*Hamlet.* Who is to be buried in it?

*I Clown.* One who was a woman, sir; but, rest her soul in peace, she's dead.

*Hamlet.* How precise the knave is! We must speak with exactness, or ambiguity will undo us. By the Lord, Horatio, I have noticed it these past three years; the age has grown so finical that the peasant races the courtier so hard in imitating his wit that he steps on his heel.<sup>8</sup> How long hast thou been a grave-maker?<sup>9</sup>

*I Clown.* Of all days in the year, I came to it that day our late King Hamlet overcame Fortinbras.

*Hamlet.* How long since is that?

*I Clown.* Cannot you tell that? Every fool can tell that. It was the very day that young Hamlet was born; he who is mad, and sent to England.

*Hamlet.* Yes, by the Virgin,—why was he sent into England?

*I Clown.* Why, because he was mad. He shall recover his wits there; or, if he do not, it's no great matter there.

<sup>8</sup> Literally, "galls his chilblain".

<sup>9</sup> "Note that throughout this dialogue Hamlet addresses the Clown in the second person singular, while the Clown replies in the second person plural" (Furness). In Elizabethan days this pronominal distinction was maintained, and it is comparatively unfamiliar to the modern reader. The difference is that roughly of the uses of the same pronouns in modern French and German. "Thou" is used in addressing persons with affection, familiarity, or condescension. "You" is used in serious discourse with those usually of equal social rank. For instance, note the following from *The Merchant of Venice*, II, ii, 140, 141:

*Gratiano.* I have a suit to *you*.

*Bassanio.* *You* have obtained it.

*Gratiano.* Nay, *you* must not deny me: I must go  
With *you* to Belmont.

*Bassanio.* Why, then, *you* must. But hear *thee*, Gratiano:

*Thou* art too wild, too rude, and bold of voice, etc.,  
See Abbott's *Shakespearean Grammar* for an exhaustive discussion of this matter.

*Hamlet.* Why?

*I Clown.* 'Twill not be noticed in him there; there everybody is as crazy as he.

*Hamlet.* How did he become mad?

*I Clown.* Very strangely, they say.

*Hamlet.* How 'strangely'?

*I Clown.* Faith, even by losing his wits.

*Hamlet.* Upon what ground?

*I Clown.* Why, here in Denmark.<sup>10</sup> I have been sexton here, both man and boy, thirty years.

*Hamlet.* How long will a man lie in the earth before he rots?

*I Clown.* In faith, if he be not rotten before he die,—we have many pocky corpses nowadays that will scarcely hold together while being laid in,<sup>11</sup>—he will last you some eight or nine year; a tanner will last you nine year.

*Hamlet.* Why he more than another?

*I Clown.* Why, sir, his hide is so tanned with his trade that it will keep out water a great while; and water is a sore decayer of your whoreson dead body. Here's a skull, now; this skull has lain in the earth three-and-twenty years.

*Hamlet.* Whose was it?

*I Clown.* A whoreson mad fellow's it was. Whose do you think it was?

*Hamlet.* Nay, I do not know.

*I Clown.* A pestilence take him for a mad rogue! He poured a bowl of Rhenish wine on my head once. This same skull, sir, was Yorick's skull, the king's jester.

*Hamlet.* This?

*I Clown.* Even that?

<sup>10</sup> The best example in the whole scene of the difference between native wit and cultivated wit.

<sup>11</sup> An echo of the plagues,—smallpox and bubonic,—that frequently swept Europe and England for several centuries before and after the time of Shakespeare?

*Hamlet.* Let me see it. (*Taking the skull*) Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him well, Horatio; a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy. He has borne me on his back a thousand times; and now how abhorrent in my imagination this is! My stomach rebels from it. Here hung those lips I have kissed I know not how oft. Where are your gibes now, your frolicsome gambols, your songs, your flashes of merriment, that used to set the table all in a roar? Not one, now, to mock your own grinning? Quite chap-fallen? Now get you to my lady's chamber, and tell her to paint an inch thick, to make this appearance in company: make her laugh at that! I pray thee, Horatio, tell me one thing.

*Horatio.* What is it, my lord?

*Hamlet.* Dost thou think Alexander looked after this fashion in the earth?

*Horatio.* Even so.

*Hamlet.* And smelled so? pah! (*Puts down the skull*)

*Horatio.* Even so, my lord.

*Hamlet.* To what base uses we may return, Horatio! Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander till one find it stopping a bung-hole?

*Horatio.* 'Twere to think too fancifully, to imagine so.

*Hamlet.* No, in faith, not an iota, if one follow him there temperately enough, with probability to lead him; as, thus: Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returns to dust, the dust is earth, of earth we make clay, and why not of that same clay whereto he was converted might they not stop a beer-barrel?

Imperial Cæsar, dead and turned to clay,  
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away;



O, that that earth, which kept the world  
in awe,  
Should patch a wall to expel the winter's  
flaw!

But soft! but soft! Aside! here comes the king,

*Enter Priests, etc., in procession; the corpse of Ophelia;  
Laertes and Mourners following; King, Queen,  
their trains, etc.*

The queen, the courtiers. Who is it that they are  
following,

And with such incomplete rites? This betokens  
That the corpse they follow did with desperate hand  
Undo its own life. 'Twas of some rank.  
Let us crouch down awhile, and watch.

*(Retiring with Horatio)*

*Laertes.* What ceremony more than this?

*Hamlet.* That is Laertes, a very noble youth; listen.

*Laertes.* What ceremony else?

*I Priest.* Her obsequies have been as far expanded  
As we have church warrant. Her mode of death was  
doubtful;

And, except that the king's command overrules church  
law,

She should have been lodged in ground unsanctified  
Till the last trumpet; for prayers of charity,  
Broken pottery, flintstones, and pebbles should have  
been thrown on her.

Yet, here she is allowed her virginal garlands,  
And strewing of flowers, and the bringing to her last  
home

Of bell and burial.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> "In these words reference is still made to the marriage rites which in the case of maidens are sadly parodied in the funeral rites" (Clarendon).

*Laertes.* Must there no more be done?

*I Priest.* No more be done.

We would profane the service for the dead  
To sing a requiem and such rest to her  
As to souls departed in peace.

*Laertes.* Lay her in the earth,  
And from her fair and unpolluted flesh  
May violets spring! I tell thee, churlish priest,  
A ministering angel shall my sister be  
When thou liest howling in torment.<sup>18</sup>

*Hamlet.* What, the fair Ophelia!

*Queen.* Sweets to the sweet; farewell!

*(Scattering flowers)*

I hoped thou shouldst have been my Hamlet's wife;  
I thought thy bridal bed to have decked, sweet maid,  
And not to have strewed thy grave.

*Laertes.* O treble woe,

Fall ten times treble on that cursed head

Whose wicked deed thy keen reason

Deprived thee of! Hold off the earth awhile,

Till I have caught her once more in my arms.

*(Leaps into the grave)*

Now pile your dust on living and on dead,  
Till on this flat place a mountain you have made  
To overtop old Pelion, or the sky-aspiring head  
Of blue Olympus.

*Hamlet. (Advancing)* Who is he whose grief

Bears such an emphasis, whose expression of grief

Adjures the moving planets and makes them stand

Like wonder struck listeners? This is I,

Hamlet, the Dane! *(Leaps into the grave)*

*Laertes.* The devil take thy soul! *(Grappling with him)*

*Hamlet.*

Thou prayest not well.

<sup>18</sup> The Priest here makes a gesture of horror, and retires from the stage with his fellows. Compare Laertes' sentiment with the last verse of Kipling's *Gunga Din*.

I pray thee take thy fingers from my throat;  
 For, though I am not hot-tempered or rash,  
 Yet I have something in me dangerous,  
 Which let thy wisdom fear. Take away thy hand!  
*King.* Pull them apart.

*Queen.* Hamlet! Hamlet!

*All.* Gentlemen,——

*Horatio.* My good lord, quiet yourself.  
*(The Attendants part them, and they come out of the grave)*

*Hamlet.* Why, I will fight him on this theme  
 Until my eyelids will no longer wink.

*Queen.* O my son, upon what theme?

*Hamlet.* I loved Ophelia. Forty thousand brothers  
 Could not, with all their quantity of love,  
 Equal my sum. What wilt thou do for her?

*King.* O, he is mad, Laertes.

*Queen.* For love of God, regard him with forbear-  
 ance!

*Hamlet.* Zounds! Show me what thou'lt do:  
 Wouldst weep? wouldst fight? wouldst fast? wouldst  
 tear thy flesh?

Wouldst drink the vinegar and gall?<sup>14</sup> eat a croco-  
 dile?<sup>15</sup>

I'll do it. Dost thou come here to whine?  
 To outface me by leaping into her grave?  
 Be buried alive with her, and so will I;  
 And, if thou prate of mountains, let them throw  
 Millions of acres on us, till our mound,  
 Singeing its pate against the sun's own sphere,  
 Make Ossa like a wart! Nay, and if thou'lt bluster,  
 I'll rant as well as thou.

<sup>14</sup> "With the exception of the *dram of eale*, no word or phrase in this tragedy has occasioned more discussion than this *esill* ('vinegar-and-gall' of the Quartos) or *esile* (in the Folio), which as it stands, represents nothing in heaven above, or the earth beneath, or the waters under the earth" (Furness).

<sup>15</sup> For 'crocodile', see *Romeo and Juliet*, V, i, 43.

*Queen.* This is sheer madness,  
And in this way awhile the fit will work on him.  
Soon, as patient as the female dove  
When her golden pair of nestlings have hatched out,  
His silence will sit drooping.

*Hamlet.* Hear you, sir;  
What is your reason for using me thus?  
I ever loved you. But it is no matter:  
Let Hercules himself do what he may,  
The cat will mew, and the dog will have his day.<sup>16</sup>

*(Exit)*

*King.* I pray you, good Horatio, attend upon him.

*(Exit Horatio)*

*(To Laertes)* Strengthen your patience with our last  
night's speech;  
We put the whole affair to an immediate test.  
Good Gertrude, set some watch over your son.  
This grave shall have a living monument.<sup>17</sup>  
An hour of quiet shall we shortly see;  
Till then, in patience may our proceeding be. *(Exeunt)*

*Scene 2. A hall in the castle.*

*Enter Hamlet and Horatio.*

*Hamlet.* So much for this, sir; now you shall hear  
about the other affair.

Do you recall all the circumstances?

*Horatio.* Recall it, my lord!

<sup>16</sup> "Nature will assert itself in spite of Herculean efforts to prevent it".

<sup>17</sup> Wright, in the Clarendon commentary, says that 'living' is probably twofold in meaning, "first, that of 'enduring', as the Queen would understand it; secondly, Laertes would be cognizant of the deeper meaning, by which the life of Hamlet is menaced".

*Hamlet.* Sir, in my heart there was a kind of fighting  
That would not let me sleep. It seemed to me I lay  
Worse than the mutineers in irons. Hastily,—  
And praised be that haste which lets us know  
That our indiscretion sometimes serves us well  
When our deep-laid plots do fail; and that should  
teach us

There's a Divinity that shapes our ends,  
Rough-hew them how we will.<sup>18</sup>

*Horatio.* That's most certain.

*Hamlet.* Hastily, up from my cabin,  
My sea-gown scarfed about me, in the dark  
I groped to discover the letters; had my desire,  
Seized their packet, and, in fine, withdrew  
To my own room again; making so bold,  
Since my fears caused me to forget all manners, to  
unseal

Their grand commission; and there I found,  
Horatio,—

O royal knavery!—an exact command,  
Ornamented with many separate sorts of reasons  
Relative to the welfare of Denmark, and England, too,  
With, ho! such bugbears and goblins as long as I lived,  
That, on first reading, no time allowed,  
No, not to wait for the grinding of the axe,  
My head should be struck off.

*Horatio.* Is it possible!

*Hamlet.* Here's the commission; read it at more  
leisure.

But will you hear how I proceeded?

*Horatio.* I beseech you.

*Hamlet.* Being thus enmeshed in a net of villainies,—

<sup>18</sup> Hamlet's intuition of impending evil he attributes to an overshadowing Providence who guided his actions then, and has throughout the drama. God is the Great Sculptor. Man, a common, inferior workman, may roughly hew out his life, but far higher skill is required to "finish" the work.

And before my brain could map out any preliminary plan,

It was acting on impulse,—I sat down;  
Devised a new commission, and wrote it fairly well.  
I once considered it, as our statesmen do,  
A baseness to write well, and laboured much  
To forget that learning; but, sir, now  
It performed substantial service. Will you know  
The import of what I wrote?

*Horatio.* Yes, my good lord.

*Hamlet.* A most earnest adjuration from the king,  
As England was his faithful tributary,  
As love between them like the palm might flourish,  
As peace should still her wheaten garland wear,  
And be a link between their friendship,  
And many similar 'as-es' of great moment,  
That, on first view and knowledge of these contents,  
Without discussion further, more or less,  
He should the bearers put to sudden death,  
No time for shrift allowed.

*Horatio.* How was this sealed?

*Hamlet.* Why, even that was ordered by heaven.  
I had my father's signet in my purse  
Which was a duplicate of the Danish seal:  
I folded the writing up in the form of the other,  
Signed it, made the impress, and restored it safely;  
The change was never known. Now, the next day  
Was our sea-fight; and what followed this  
You know already.

*Horatio.* So Guildenstern and Rosencrantz go to death.

*Hamlet.* Why, man, they made love to this employment;

They are not on my conscience; their destruction  
Grows out of their own meddling.

'Tis perilous when the inferior nature comes  
Between the thrust and sword-points

Of mighty opponents engaged in mortal combat.

*Horatio.* Why, what a king this is!

*Hamlet.* Does it not, think you, rest upon me now,—

He who has killed my father, and stained my mother,  
Popped in between the election to the throne and my prospects,

Thrown out a bait for my own life,  
And with such duplicity,—is it not to be done with perfect conscience

To repay him with this arm? and is it not to be damned,

To permit this cancer of humanity

To proceed in further mischief?

*Horatio.* It must be shortly known to him from England

The outcome of the business there.

*Hamlet.* It will be short; the interim is mine,  
And a man's life is worth no more than to say 'One.'

But I am very sorry, good Horatio,  
That toward Laertes I forgot myself;

For in the mirror of my cause I see

The reflection of his. I'll court again his favour;

But, certainly, the bravado of his grief threw me

Into a towering passion.

*Horatio.* Peace! Who comes here?

*Enter young Osric.*

*Osric.* Your lordship is quite welcome back to Denmark.

*Hamlet.* I thank you, sir, most humbly. Do you know this busybody?

*Horatio.* No, my good lord.

*Hamlet.* Your state is all the more gracious, for it is a shortcoming to know him. He owns much land, and fertile; only let a base person be

supremely base, and he shall find a place at the king's table. He is a churl, but, as I say, he owns an immense amount of land.

*Osric.* Sweet lord, if your lordship be at leisure, I must impart a matter to you from his majesty.

*Hamlet.* I will receive it, sir, with all diligence of spirit. Put your bonnet to its right use; 'tis for the head.

*Osric.* I thank your lordship: it is very hot.

*Hamlet.* No, believe me, it is very cold; the wind is northerly.

*Osric.* It is moderately cold, my lord, indeed.

*Hamlet.* But yet I think it is very sultry and hot for my constitution.

*Osric.* Excessively, my lord; it is very sultry,—as it were,—I cannot tell how. But, my lord, his majesty bade me to signify to you that he has laid a great wager on your head. Sir, this is the affair,——

*Hamlet.* I beseech you, remember the rules of courtesy,——

*(Hamlet moves him to put on his hat)*

*Osric.* No, for my comfort, in good faith; in good faith, for my comfort's sake. Sir, there has newly come to court Laertes; believe me, an absolute gentleman, full of diverse excellences, lovely to associate with, and of fine appearance: indeed, to speak feelingly of him, he is the guide and preceptor of gentility, for in him you shall find the sum and substance of all good qualities which a gentleman would like to display.

*Hamlet.* Sir, your description of him suffers no deficiency on your part; though, I know, to enumerate inventorially his characteristics would dizzy the memory, as a yawing craft fails to overtake a swift sailer. But, in extolling him truly, I take him to be a soul of great combination, and his



essential virtues to be so rare, as, to tell truth about him, to make his reflection in the mirror the only resemblance to him, and nothing but his own shadow can keep pace with him.

*Osric.* Your lordship speaks most infallibly concerning him.

*Hamlet.* What is the upshot of all this, sir? Why should we wrap this gentleman in our more inexperienced breath?

*Osric.* Sir?

*Horatio.* Is it not possible to understand each other in simpler language? You can do it, sir, really.

*Hamlet.* What does the mention of this gentleman import?

*Osric.* Of Laertes?

*Horatio.* His purse is empty already; all his golden words are spent.

*Hamlet.* Of him, sir.

*Osric.* I know you are not ignorant,——

*Hamlet.* I wish you did, sir; yet, in faith, if you did, it would not much commend me. Well, sir?

*Osric.* You are not ignorant of such excellence as Laertes is,——

*Hamlet.* I dare not confess that, lest I should seek to compare to him in excellence; but if I understood any man well, I would understand myself.

*Osric.* I mean, sir, as regards his weapon; in the reputation it gives him, he is without a peer.

*Hamlet.* What's his weapon?

*Osric.* Rapier and dagger.

*Hamlet.* Those are two of his weapons; but, go on.

*Osric.* The king, sir, has wagered with him six Barbary horses, against which he has staked, as I take it, six French rapiers and poinards, with their trappings, such as girdle, hangers, and so on. Three of the carriages, in faith, are very appealing to fancy, matching well the hilts, most deli-

cately wrought carriages, and of quite elaborate design.

*Hamlet.* What do you call the carriages?

*Horatio.* I knew you would need some marginal notes before you were through.

*Osrice.* The carriages, sir, are the hangers.

*Hamlet.* The word would be more relevant to the matter, if we could carry cannon by our sides; I hope it may be hangers until then. But, go on: six Barbary horses against six French swords, their trappings, and three elaborately wrought carriages; that's the French bet against the Danish. Why is this 'staked'?

*Osrice.* The king, sir, has laid a wager that in a dozen passes between yourself and Laertes he shall not exceed you three hits; he has bet on twelve against nine; and it would take place immediately if your lordship would vouchsafe 'acceptance.'

*Hamlet.* What if I do not accept?

*Osrice.* I mean, my lord, the actual opposition of your person in trial.

*Hamlet.* Sir, I shall be walking here in the hall; if it please his majesty, 'tis my regular hour for exercise. If the foils be brought, the gentleman willing, and the king maintain his purpose, I will win for him if I can; if not, I'll gain nothing but my own humiliation and the awkward hits to my credit.

*Osrice.* Shall I re-deliver your sentiments thus?

*Hamlet.* To this effect, sir; after that you may add whatever flourishes your nature demands.

*Osrice.* I commend my duty to your lordship.

*Hamlet.* Yours, yours. (*Exit Osrice*) He does well to commend it himself; there are no other tongues which will serve that term.

*Horatio.* This young lapwing runs away with the shell yet on his head.

*Hamlet.* He would compliment his mother's breast before he nursed at it. Thus he has, with a whole bevy of others whom I know the frothy age dotes on, only adopted the fashionable mode of speech and external tricks of conversation; superficial knowledge and superficial language, which wins them the approval of the most foolish and over-refined judgments; but blow them up in a real test, and the bubbles burst.

*Enter a Lord.*

*Lord.* My lord, his majesty has just commended himself to you by young Osric, who has returned word that you are awaiting him in the hall. He again sends to learn whether it is your pleasure to hold sword-play with Laertes, or whether you desire to delay awhile.

*Hamlet.* I am constant to my purpose; it follows the king's pleasure: if his convenience summon, mine is ready; now or whensoever he pleases, provided I am as able then as now.

*Lord.* The king, queen, and all are coming down.

*Hamlet.* Just in time.

*Lord.* The queen desires that you try some conciliating conduct toward Laertes before you fall to fencing.

*Hamlet.* She instructs me well.

*Horatio.* You will lose this wager, my lord.

*Hamlet.* I do not think so; since he went to France, I have been in continual practice. I shall win at the odds. But you would not think how foreboding my heart feels; but it does not matter.

*Horatio.* Nay, my good lord,—

*Hamlet.* It is but foolery: such kind of misgiving as would perhaps trouble a woman.

*Horatio.* If your mind dislike anything, obey its warn-

ing. I will forestall their repairing hither, and say you are not fit.

*Hamlet.* Not a whit; we defy augury. There's a special Providence in the fall of a sparrow.<sup>19</sup> If it be now, 'tis not yet to come; if it be not yet to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come; the readiness is everything. Since no man takes away any of his earthly possessions, what matter if he leave early? Never mind.

*Enter King, Queen, Laertes, Lords, Osric, and other Attendants with foils and gauntlets; a table with bowls of wine on it is brought in.*

*King.* Come, Hamlet, come, and take this hand from me.

*(King puts Laertes' hand into Hamlet's)*

*Hamlet.* Give me your pardon, sir: I've done you wrong;

But pardon it, as you are a gentleman.

Those present know,

And you necessarily have heard, how I am afflicted

With severe dementia. What I have done,

That might your nature, sense of honour, and repugnance

Rudely awaken, I here proclaim was madness.

Was it Hamlet who wronged Laertes? Not the true Hamlet!

If Hamlet be subtracted from himself,

And when not his real self does wrong Laertes,

Then Hamlet does it not himself, and denies it.

Who does it, then? His madness. If it be so,

The true Hamlet is one of the faction who is wronged;

His madness is poor Hamlet's enemy.

Sir, before this assemblage,

Let my disclaimer of intentional evil

<sup>19</sup> See Matthew 10: 29.

Exonerate me so far in your generous thoughts,  
As to think that accidentally I shot my arrow  
O'er the house, and hurt my brother.<sup>20</sup>

*Laertes.* I am satisfied as to my personal feelings,  
The sting of whose motive, in this case, would stir  
me most

To my revenge; but on technical grounds of honour  
I stand aloof, and will make no reconciliation  
Until by elder authorities on the code of honour  
I have received a judgment backed by precedent,  
That can make peace with an unstained name.

But, till that time,

I do receive your proffered love as love,  
And will not wrong it.

*Hamlet.* I do embrace it freely,  
And will this brotherly wager frankly play.  
Give us the foils. Come on.

*Laertes.* Come, one for me.

*Hamlet.* I'll be your foil, Laertes; in my ignorance  
of the art

Your skill shall, like a star in the darkest night,  
Be brilliantly set off, indeed.

*Laertes.* You mock me, sir.

*Hamlet.* No, by this hand, I do not.

*King.* Give them the foils, young Osric. Son Hamlet,  
You know the wager?

*Hamlet.* Very well, my lord;

<sup>20</sup> This speech has given rise to much scholarly controversy. Neilson asserts that Hamlet deliberately lies, though it is true that he did not intentionally kill Polonius (Lake Ed., *Hamlet*, p. 271). Professor Lowes quotes Dr. Johnson, who wishes Hamlet had made some other excuse to Laertes than the false one of madness. But Lowes defends Hamlet rightly on the ground that, in the execution of his purpose, there is no other reason that he could give. In line 73, Hamlet still shows his intent to carry out his promise to the Ghost: "to tell the truth now would be to defeat that design at the crucial moment" (Lowes: *Hamlet*, in *English Reading Series*, p. 240, Henry Holt & Co., 1914). Every critic admits the absolute sincerity, otherwise, of Hamlet's disclaimer.

Your grace has offered odds on the weaker opponent.

*King.* I do not fear it; I have seen you both;

But since he has improved, we have the advantage on points.

*Laertes.* This is too heavy; let me see another.

*Hamlet.* This one pleases me well. These foils all have a uniform length?

*(They prepare to play)*

*Osric.* Yes, my good lord.

*King.* Set the bowls of wine upon that table.

Should Hamlet give the first or second hit,

Or repay him by returning the third thrust,

Let all the battlements their ordnance sound.

The king shall drink to Hamlet's health,

And in the cup a costly pearl shall throw

Richer than that which four successive kings

In Denmark's crown have worn. Give me the cups;

And let the kettle-drum to trumpet speak,

The trumpet to the cannoneer without,

The cannons to the heavens, the heaven again to earth,

'Now drinks the king to Hamlet!' Come, begin;

And you, the judges, keep a wary eye.

*Hamlet.* Come on, sir.

*Laertes.* Come, my lord. *(They fence)*

*Hamlet.* One.

*Laertes.* No.

*Hamlet.* Judgment.

*Osric.* A hit, a very palpable hit.

*Laertes.* Well; again.

*King.* Stay; give me drink. Hamlet, this pearl is yours;

Here's health to you.

*(Trumpets sound, and cannon shot off within)*

Give him the cup.

*Hamlet.* I'll play this bout first; set it aside for awhile.

Come. *(They play)* Another hit; what say you?

*Laertes.* A touch, a touch, I do confess.

*King.* Our son shall win.

*Queen.* He's fat and scant in breath.  
Here, Hamlet, take my handkerchief, and wipe your  
brow;

The queen drinks to your success, Hamlet.

*Hamlet.* Thank you, madam.

*King.* Gertrude, do not drink!

*Queen.* I will, my lord; I pray you, pardon me.

*King.* (*Aside*) It is the poisoned cup; it is too late.

*Hamlet.* I dare not drink yet, madam; but by and by.

*Queen.* Come, let me wipe your face.

*Laertes.* My lord, I'll hit him now.

*King.* I do not think so.

*Laertes.* (*Aside*) And yet 'tis almost against my  
conscience.

*Hamlet.* Come, for the third bout, Laertes: you  
merely dally;

I pray you, thrust with your utmost violence;

I fear you are treating me like a child.

*Laertes.* Do you say that? Come on.

*Osric.* Nothing decisive thus far, either way.

*Laertes.* Have at you now!

(*Laertes wounds Hamlet; then, in scuffling, they acci-  
dentally exchange rapiers, and Hamlet wounds  
Laertes*)

*King.* Separate them; they are incensed.

*Hamlet.* Nay, come, again. (*Queen falls*)

*Osric.* Look to the queen there, ho!

*Horatio.* Both have drawn blood. How is it with  
you, my lord?

*Osric.* How is it with you, Laertes?

*Laertes.* Why, as with a woodcock fast in its own  
snare, Osric;

I am justly killed by my own treachery.

*Hamlet.* How does the queen?

*King.* She swoons to see them bleed.

*Queen.* No, no, the drink, the drink—O my dear Hamlet—

The drink, the drink! I am poisoned. (*Dies*)

*Hamlet.* O villainy! Ho! let the door be locked!

Treachery! seek it out. (*Laertes falls*)

*Laertes.* It is here, Hamlet. Hamlet, thou art slain;

No medicine in the world can do thee good;

In thee there is not half an hour of life:

The treacherous instrument is in thy hand,

Unblunted and envenomed. The foul plot

Hath turned itself on me. Lo, here I lie,

Never to rise again. Thy mother's poisoned!

I can say no more. The king, the king's to blame.

*Hamlet.* And the point envenomed, too!

Then, venom, to thy work! (*Stabs King*)

*All.* Treason! treason!

*King.* O, yet defend me, friends! I am only hurt.

*Hamlet.* Here, thou incestuous, murderous, damned Dane,

Drink down this potion! (*Forcing King to drink*)

This holds thy precious pearl!

Follow my mother! (*King dies*)

*Laertes.* He is justly served;

It is a poison compounded by himself.

Exchange forgiveness with me, noble Hamlet;

May mine and my father's day come not upon thee,

Nor thine on me! <sup>21</sup> (*Dies*)

<sup>21</sup> And thus Hamlet finally achieves his revenge. The reader will have noticed that the Ghost has not appeared since the scene in the Queen's boudoir (III-iv). As Masefield has said, Hamlet is neither weak nor impractical, but has hesitated because the deed has involved from the start "a defilement of personal ideals, difficult for a wise mind to justify. . . . Revenge and chance together restore life to her course, by a destruction of the lives too beastly, and of the lives too hasty, and of the lives too foolish, and of the life too wise, to be all together on earth at the same time." (John Masefield: *Shakespeare*, pp. 162-167, Henry Holt & Co., 1911).



*Hamlet.* May Heaven make thee free of it! I follow thee.  
I am dying, Horatio. Wretched queen, adieu!  
You who look pale and are trembling at this scene,  
Who are either the audience or the mute performers  
in this act,

Had I but time—but this stern deputy, Death,  
Is strict in his arrests—O, I could tell you—  
But let it be. Horatio, I am dead;  
Thou livest: report me and my cause aright  
To the unsatisfied.

*Horatio.* Never believe it;  
I am more an antique Roman than a Dane:  
Here's yet some liquor left.

*Hamlet.* As thou art a man,  
Give me the cup. Let go; by heaven, I'll have it.  
O, good Horatio! what a dishonoured name,  
Things standing thus unknown, shall live behind me!  
If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,  
Deny thyself heaven's happiness for awhile,  
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,  
To tell my story.

*(March afar off, and peal of ordnance within)*

What warlike noise is this?

*Osr.* Young Fortinbras, in conquest come from  
Poland,

To the ambassadors from England gives  
This warlike salute.

*Hamlet.* O, I die, Horatio;  
The potent poison quite overcomes my spirit.  
I cannot live to hear the news from England;  
But I do prophesy that the election falls  
To Fortinbras; he has my dying approval;  
So tell him, with the events, more or less,  
Which have prompted my choice,—the rest is silence.

*(Dies)*

*Horatio.* Now breaks a noble heart. Good night,  
sweet prince,

And flights of angels accompany thee to thy rest!

*(March within)*

Why does the drum come this direction?

*Enter Fortinbras, and the English Ambassadors, with drums, colours, and Attendants.*

*Fortinbras.* Where is this sight?

*Horatio.* What is it that you wish to see?  
If anything resembling woe or wonder, cease your search.

*Fortinbras.* This heap of slain proclaims great slaughter. O proud Death,  
What feast is prepared in thy eternal cell,  
That thou so many princes at a shot  
Hast so bloodily struck down?

*1 Ambassador.* The sight is dismal;  
And our affairs from England come too late.  
The ears are insensible that should give us hearing  
To tell him his commandment is fulfilled,  
That Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead.  
From whom should we receive our thanks?

*Horatio.* Not from his mouth,  
Had it the ability of life to thank you.  
He never gave commandment for their death.  
But since, so closely after this bloody affair,  
You from the Polish wars, and you from England,  
Have arrived here, give an order that these bodies  
High on a platform be placed in public view;  
And let me speak to the yet unknowing world  
How these things came about. So you shall hear  
Of sensual, bloody, and unnatural acts,  
Of accidental judgments, casual slaughters,  
Of deaths instigated by cunning and unjustifiable causes;

And, in this final issue, purposes misdirected  
Rebounding upon the inventors' heads: all I can

Most truly relate.

*Fortinbras.*

Let us hasten to hear it,

And call the noblest of the realm to audience.

For myself, with sorrow I embrace good fortune.

I have some rights which must be remembered in this kingdom,

Which now to claim, my opportunity invites me.

*Horatio.* Of that also I shall have cause to speak,

And from the mouth of him whose desire will be seconded by others;

And let all this be performed at once,

While men's minds are wild, lest more mischance,

A consequence of plots and errors, happen.

*Fortinbras.*

Let four captains

Bear Hamlet, like a soldier, to the platform;

For he was likely, had he been elevated to the throne,

To have proved most like a king; and, for his death,

The soldiers' music and military rites

Speak loudly for him.

Take up the bodies. Such a sight as this,

Becomes a battlefield, but here seems much amiss.

Go, bid the soldiers salute.

*(Dead march played. Exeunt, conveying the dead bodies; after which a peal of ordnance is shot off.)*



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